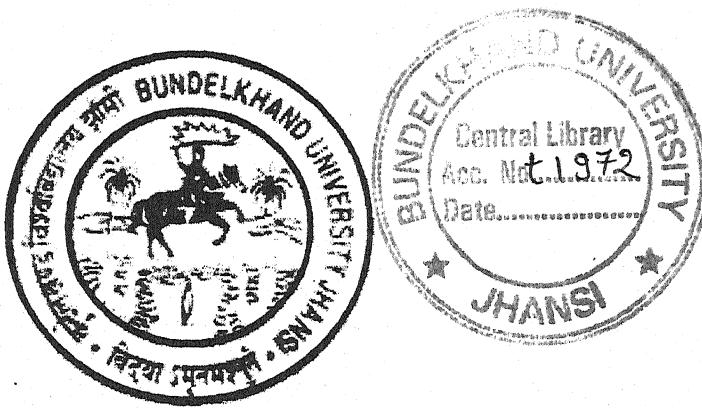


A CRITICAL STUDY OF THE NON FICTIONAL WORKS OF JOHN STEINBECK

THESIS SUBMITTED FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN ENGLISH



By
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JHANSI**

2006

To
The Loving Members
of my family
whose affection,
understanding and help
made this work possible.



JOHN STEINBECK
(1902-1968)

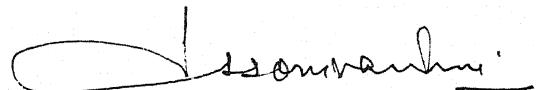
CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the thesis entitled "*A Critical Study of The Non Fictional Works of John Steinbeck*" submitted for the award of Ph.D. degree in English by Shri Jamuna Prasad embodies the result of the bona fide research work carried out by him under my supervision. No part of study reported here has so far been submitted anywhere for obtaining any other degree or diploma.

Mr. Jamuna Prasad has worked under me for the period required under the Ph.D. ordinance-7 of Bundelkhand University.

The thesis is his orginal contribution and is up to the mark both in its academic contents and the quality of presentation.

Date. 07.05.2006.



Dr. J.S. Somvanshi
(Supervisor)

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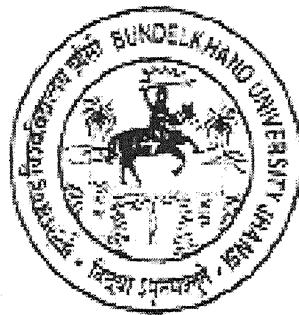
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Date.

Jamuna Prasad
Jamuna Prasad



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CHAPTER 1

JOHN STEINBECK : AN INTRODUCTION

John Steinbeck (Feb.27,1902-Dec.21,1968) grew up in California, where grandparents on both sides of the family had settled in the mid-1800s. While travelling in Germany in the 1850s, his paternal grandmother, Almira Ann Dickson, a New Englander, met and fell in love with a young cabinetmaker named John Adolph Grossteinbeck. They were married in the holy land. Shortly before the Civil War, they came to America, lived in New Jersey, and then in Florida, where Steinbeck's father, John Ernest was born. After serving briefly with the confederate army, the grandfather moved with his family back to New England, and then, he left for California, settling in 1874 near Hollister, where he was soon joined by his family. The grandfather operated a flour-mill and along with other family members gained a reputation for honesty and industry. In 1890 John Ernest Steinbeck, tall and strong, moved to King City, became a book keeper and in 1892 married Olive Hamilton, a young school teacher.

Olive Hamilton's Irish parents had left Ulster in 1851 and appeared in central California soon thereafter, while the early whereabouts of the family remains obscure. It is known that Olive was born in San Jose in 1866. Subsequently, the Hamiltons, homesteaded a sprawling 1750- acreland East of King City. If the fictional account of East of Eden (1952) reliable, the family had a difficult time growing crops and raising cattle on this land, which had little water and well holes that often dried up in the summer heat. But the vigorous,

imaginative father overcame the challenges and shortcomings of the land, and Olive's mother, strict and practical, instilled in members of the growing, close-knit family respect for God, Bible and facts.

John Steinbeck was born on February 27, 1902, in a middle class family living in Salinas, California. Salinas is an agricultural community in the middle of a fertile Valley south of San Francisco. There are mountains on both sides of the Valley and Pacific Ocean is not far away. He, thus, grew up between the Gabilan Mountains in the Eastern edge of the Salinas Valley and the austere Santa Lucias to the west. In the opening pages of East of Eden, Steinbeck explained his childhood reaction to these two ranges of mountains, a reaction that would have powerful effect on much of Steinbeck's writing:

I remember that the Gabilan Mountains to the east of the Valley were light gay mountains full of sun and loveliness and a kind of invitation so that you wanted to climb into their warm foothills almost as you want to climb into the lap of a beloved mother. They were beckoning mountains with a brown grass-love. The Santa Lucias stood up against the sky to the west and kept the Valley from the open sea, and they were dark and brooding - unfriendly and dangerous. I always found in myself a dread of west and a love of east. Where I ever got such an idea I can not say, unless it could be that the morning came over the peaks of Gabilans and the night drifted back from the ridges of the Santa Lucias. It may be that the birth and death of the day had some part in my feeling about the two ranges of mountains.¹

The above statement makes obvious that the eastern mountains in Steinbeck's fiction represent the unknown, safe world, while the western mountains are a land of death. To enter the Santa Lucias is to

confront death in one form or another. There is no exception to this in Steinbeck's fiction. Death in these mountains, however, is not simply an end; it is a transcendent experience in which one may achieve a new world vision and become recognizably and even consciously a part of the "Whole" which is unknowable except by "being it, by living into it."²

The house in which Steinbeck was born was a large Victorian structure with the familiar gables and embellishment of the period. A few years after his family needed a spacious house, this one was to serve the Steinbecks for some thirty years. The family itself proved to be unusual, at least for writers of that generation because disruptive tensions were seemingly few and family life appeared to be secure and happy. The father was a quiet, kindly man involved in family affairs interested in his children. He was the first to recognize his son's unusual talents and to express confidence in his promise as a writer. The mother, energetic and active in club work, hoped that her boy would grow up to be a banker. When she realized that John's abilities and dreams lay elsewhere, she firmly believed that some day he would become a successful writer like Tarkington, a novelist popular at that time. Both parents regarded cultural influences as important and enjoyable aspects of life. Several times in a year the family traveled by train to San Francisco to see plays and attend concerts. As the parents were well educated and loved books, it was the custom after dinner for

everyone to gather in the sitting room and listen to father and mother take turns reading the popular Alice books, adventure stories by Robert Louis Stevenson (1850-94), or tales from Greek and Roman mythology. On his ninth birthday, John was delighted to receive from his father a copy of Morted' Arthur (1485). It was his first book, and next to the Bible it proved to be the most influential. In later years writing what most readers regarded then and later as comic novels or social-protest fiction, Steinbeck often drew upon the Arthurian tales for ideas or materials for portraying character or shaping action.

Steinbeck's boyhood was only occasionally bookish and rarely sheltered. Among the boys in that part of town, he was usually the leader-the one to start a secret society, battle imaginary foes, or lead a gang into a showdown with a rival group. A slough nearby was often a site for mud battles or fights. On more than one occasion John's vigorous leadership got him in trouble with a housewife in the neighborhood. Sometimes chores kept him occupied. The father was a good provider, but the family was not well off and John had to earn his own money. For a year or two he carried papers for the Morning Journal, a job he performed with only average proficiency, and during high school he worked on nearby ranches during the summers. His lifelong interest in the mysteries and beauty of nature began with boyhood experiences with animals, birds, trees, and flowers, which were abundant in and outside Salinas.

The environment into which Steinbeck was born served well to develop his inclinations and to satisfy his needs. The Salinas Valley of California provided a physical setting in which majesty and menace were mixed. Its alternate promises of fertility and threats of drought worked wonder in a sensitive, plastic nature and stirred an alert intelligence. He developed a passion for all the sounds, scents and tastes of things, animate and inanimate. These crowded in upon him making him conscious, as he once expressed it of "how the afternoon felt". Spontaneously investigative and responsive from the first, the young Steinbeck found himself in a family setting that he could enjoy. Its assets included many books from among which the boy chose what he needed to serve the purpose of his self education: Malory, Milton, Shakespeare, Dante, Goethe, Dostoevski, and Thucydides. That he digested instruction well is evident in the enduring influence that many of these guides had on his own work. The oneness of human experience was real to Steinbeck in relation to time as well as to space. What he read seemed to be not about events and passions of far away and long ago but rather, as he observed "about things that happened to me".

Steinbeck's family neither rich nor poor, made up a comfortable community. The members of it helped each other when they could but encouraged any show of initiative and independence. The father always unobtrusively sympathetic to the younger Steinbeck's desire to become a writer, once paid, out of a small salary as an official of city

government, a minute allowance, which kept him in the bare necessities of life while he worked at his manuscripts. The mother as a girl had been a school teacher and, though she did not want her son to become a writer and would have preferred to see him established in a profession of knowledge and prestige, she set him on the long search for enlightenment through books.

Steinbeck's home-life as has been "definitely bourgeois". He must have been a somewhat solemn child. Judging from the temperament of "the boy Jody" in The Red Pony (1937), who seems to be a partly autobiographical character, Steinbeck had remarked that children are wise rather than gay. There was much to make life interesting for a boy in that region. The readers of The Red Pony will recall how impressed Jody was with the mountains that lifted above him. The Gabilans were "Jolly", but the mountains on the coast side seemed to have a menace.

It is evident from all his writings how the fertile bed of the Valley attracted Steinbeck: it was full of living and growing things, cattle and the fruit and grain and vegetables being raised and produced there. El Camino Real, which had been the king of Spain's highway, twined across the Valley from one crumbling mission to another. Steinbeck as a child often visited Monterey, the most romantic of California towns. The Spaniards had named and claimed it just three hundred years before he was born; in the 1700's the principal

California mission, the San Carlos, was built there, and in the following century Monterey was capital of the Bear Flag republic. It is still a picturesque and interesting place. Its most notable feature is the fantastically deformed cypresses that writhe in the wind on the black cliff above the ocean.

Steinbeck became acquainted early in life with the paisanos he was to write of in Tortilla Flat (1935). The greatest single influence on John Steinbeck's life and work was his California origin. He was born and brought up in the extreme south-west coast of the United States. Many of his successful pieces of fiction have their setting in a region, the Pacific Ocean between San Francisco and Los Angeles. The Pacific Ocean sprawls to the west and the towering Seirra Nevada mountain keeps sentinel in the east. Steinbeck's favorite region in this geographical area is the Salinas Valley, christened by him nostalgically as the "long Valley". Its outlet to the Pacific is at Monterey Bay.

Steinbeck loved the people inhabiting this favorite region as much as he was fascinated by it. Like Wordsworth, he loved nature and man, or to be more precise, man in nature. To such a love is incidental the love of right causes especially those concerning the expropriated and indigent sections. Such a love and solicitude for a common man is what informs his most characteristic works. This makes him valid even today. His sympathy for the underdog and his sense of justice and fair play were probably imbibed from his home environment. His father was

the treasurer of Monterey Country and was fairly a well to do person. At home, young Steinbeck enjoyed all the advantages of an enlightened and cultured domestic back ground. His mother, prior to her marriage, was a schoolteacher. This probably gave him the right kind of introduction to books. Indeed, he seems to have read widely; much of his knowledge was gathered that way. During his school holidays, Steinbeck used to work in the farms of the neighborhood. This threw him into the lap of the lush, green valleys and brown-grassed hills of Central California. Salinas, his birthplace, had a mixed and colorful population—a cross-section of the American nation. Among them he chose his friends, who later became his unforgettable characters in fiction.

Steinbeck's childhood must have been much like that of the boy Jody in The Red Pony, whose love for the Gabilan Mountains to the east and fear of the Santa Lucia range toward the ocean Steinbeck acknowledged as a person his childhood experience on the opening page of East of Eden. Like Jody who made a death symbol out of the black cypress trees under which the pigs were scalded and a life symbol out of the mossy tub, which caught the spring water, Steinbeck was a sensitive boy. Replying to a publisher's request for early biographical information, he wrote back that the most important things in his childhood would be of no meaning to others "... the way the sparrows hopped about on the mud street early in the morning when I was little

... the most tremendous morning in the world when my pony had a colt."³

This sensitivity to the experiences of childhood is also revealed in some remarks Steinbeck made early in 1936 when he was thinking about The Red Pony:

I want to recreate a child's world, not of fairies and giants but of colors more clear than they are to adults of tastes more sharp and of queer heart breaking feelings that overwhelm children in a moment. [Jody's feelings at the end of "The great Mountains" for example] I want to put down the way 'afternoon felt'- and the feeling about a bird that sang in a tree in the evening."

Another important factor in Steinbeck's early years was his mother's former position as a school teacher. There must have been books around the household to interest a young boy. He must have been a pretty wellread boy when he entered his high school. His being president of his senior class, however, was due more to his position on the track and basketball teams than his scholarship or literary effort for El Gabilan, the school paper. During his high school years he extended his experience of the California countryside and its people by spending many of his days as a hired hand on nearby ranches. In the year's interval between graduation and entering Stanford, he took employment as assistant chemist in a sugar beet factory nearby. In the autumn of 1919 he entered Stanford University at Palo Alto. He made none of the athletic teams while he was there, though at first he tried out "

vaguely" for crew and football. In the spring of 1920 he left Stanford for a while, returning into autumn but disappearing again soon afterwards. He went to work on a ranch at King City. The place where Steinbeck was working and the varied jobs that came his way at that ranch were helping him both to absorb background material and to know at first hand what it was like to be an agricultural laborer. He has always been sympathetic to the common man and his problems, and unlike so many writers he is never bored with simple, illiterate people. When asked, after the publication of In Dubious Battle (1936), if he had swung to the left, he answered that he had always essentially been on the left.

Steinbeck returned to Stanford for the academic year 1922-23. He roomed at this time with C.A. Sheffield, who afterwards taught English at Stanford and later became a newspaperman in northern California. He did not stay on regularly at Stanford, but dropped again, worked on other ranches and spent a summer as night chemist at the sugar factory.

Steinbeck left Stanford for good in 1925. He had announced that he wasn't studying for a degree, and had roamed over the curriculum at will, taking whatever subjects he pleased. In the several years he spent at Stanford he earned only about half of the required 180 units. He wrote both poetry and prose for the university magazines, the Spectator and the Lit. It was at this time that he put on paper the first version of what was to become his first published novel, Cup of Gold; it was then

a short story called "A lady in Infra Red." He took all the writing courses in school except one, a course in play-writing for which the professor considered him unfit. His ambition to be a writer led him to New York after he left Stanford for the last time. He worked for a newspaper for a short while after his arrival in New York; he pitched out this job for reporting the news philosophically and poetically instead of presenting the blunt facts. He became a hood carrier and in his capacity helped build the new Madison Square Garden. When the Garden was finished, he stayed in New York trying to become a freelance writer. Guy Holt, who was then an editor for Mc Bride and Company, had encouraged Steinbeck to prepare a book of short stories. But after Holt had left Mc Bride to join the Day Company the Mc Bride editor refused to accept the stories despite the brouhaha Steinbeck raised in the office. Later Steinbeck collapsed on the street and was taken to a hospital. He decided it was time to return to California. Mc Bride and Company accepted Cup of Gold, which was actually the fourth novel he had written. It was published in August 1929, and while it was not a money maker, Steinbeck felt sufficiently encouraged to get married. His bride was Carol Henning, who like his mother, had come from San Jose. She ran away with him and they were married in Los Angeles in 1930.

Steinbeck and his wife went to live in a small house his father gave him in Pacific Grove. Though it is near the art colony at Carmel-by the sea and although it lies just below Monterey, Pacific Grove has none of Carmel's Bohemianism or of Monterey lurid reputation. He and his wife had been planning for some time to visit Mexico, and now for the first time they had enough money to go. In July 1935 he signed a contract with Covici-Friede for six books. Steinbeck might have driven harder bargain than he did with Covici-Friede, but he liked the firm and was satisfied with the terms he received. In the autumn the Steinbecks at last went to Mexico, in their old car they had intended to stay through the winter, seeing fiestas at Oaxaca, Guadalupe and other places, but Steinbeck felt he could not work in Mexico. It was so different like being in an under sea world; the Mexicans seemed to live at a deep dream- level. The Steinbecks came back to California before the year was out. Steinbeck felt Mexico was far too bewildering to write anything about, at least from what he knew of it so far. In the summer of 1936 he moved away from Pacific Grove, where the coastal fogs had begun to make his wife miserable with sinus. They left their little vineclad cottage and moved to the Santa Cruz Mountains near Los Gatos, where they had a home built along the lines of an old fashioned California ranch house. There are 'coons and' possums and rabbits all about and at night the coyotes can be heard howling. The house is set in an oak forest, and has a long veranda over looking the Santa Clara

valley, in the heart of which Steinbeck's mother and his wife had been born.

During the war year Steinbeck's personal fortunes were undergoing major changes. The marriage with Carol was breaking up, as close friends, who had witnessed the many quarrels, expected. The divorce in 1942 was followed in 1943 by Steinbeck's marriage in New Orleans to dancer Gwen Verdon, whom he had met in California. Perhaps because of the war, marital changes and demands of his occupation, Steinbeck moved restlessly about from New York City to Mexico to California and back to New York. Planning to settle in Monterey, he bought an old house in the town but, after living there for a year, decided that the people were not friendly, sold the house and moved permanently to New York. His only children, two boys, were born in 1944 and 1946. Two years after the war, Steinbeck and photographer Robert Capa travelled in Russia. The result of their collaboration, A Russian Journal appeared in 1948. During this period Steinbeck also wrote the scripts for the mediocre film versions of The Red Pony and for the excellent Viva Zapata (1975).

Steinbeck was deeply shaken by two events in the late 1940s. His second marriage with Gwen Verdon was floundering. By 1948 they had agreed upon a divorce. A greater blow awaited him. In 1948, while in the New York apartments, he received word that his friend Ed Ricketts had been grievously injured in a cartrain wreck in Monterey. Deeply

upset, Steinbeck rushed to Monterey. When Ricketts died a few days later, the writer had to be given a sedative and put in bed. He later wrote a tribute to Ricketts that served as the introduction to the 1951 publication of The Log from The Sea of Cortez, and, as a final tribute, he created the character of Doc in Sweet Thursday (1954).

Attempting to forget the broken marriage and the loss of Ricketts, Steinbeck worked hard on the Viva Zapata! (1975) script and on a projected big book about the Salinas Valley. For months, however recollections and loneliness plagued him. In early 1949, after returning to the Pacific Grove cottage, he met another woman who was to prove essential to his life. Elaine Scott, a talented and understanding person, helped Steinbeck find himself again. After her divorce, they were married in 1950. He returned to the Salinas book with energy and purpose. The book initially planned as a fictional account of his mother's family, the Hamiltons, included also a New England family, the Trasks. During the years of writing, the Trasks became prominent. The apparent failure to relate the two families and the awkward mixture of allegory and romanticism weakened an otherwise impressive work. East of Eden was published in 1952.

Life in New York City proved usually to Steinbeck's liking through the years. He welcomed the anonymity of the city, its tolerance for all kinds of people and activities, the opportunities in writing, publishing, and the arts. After his marriage to Elaine in 1950, Steinbeck

felt natural and comfortable in routines of city life, which, for the Steinbecks, were generally quiet and moderate. Occasionally they entertained friends, writers, stage-people, journalists, publishers in the brownstone apartment pressure of nature and society have compelled the havenots to co-operate in order to survive.

As a writer, Steinbeck always felt the tensions and anxieties of his age. He says that "Americans, very many of them, are obsessed with tensions. Nerves are drawn tense and twanging. Emotions boil up and spill over into violence largely in meaningless or unnatural directions. In the cities people scream with rage at one another, taking out their unease on the first observable target. The huge reservoir of the anger of frustration is full to bursting --- of love, only the word, bent and bastardized remains."⁵

Steinbeck's opinions were founded upon what he saw in contemporary American scene; modern degeneration and spiritual chaos. He felt strongly that in spite of material prosperity and plenty, the people were morally and spiritually poorer than before because, "We have the things and we have not had time to develop a way of thinking about them."⁶

To Steinbeck, California is important not only because its soil is rich but also because it has produced men of importance in the fields of science and art. John Gunther records; "But consider California; California swarms with poets, artists, men of science. There is no

opulence in America to surpass it, even in New England. Think of the procession that begins with Bret Harte and Ambros Bierec and continues today with Robinson Jeffers and John Steinbeck."⁷

The Salinas Valley, an integral part of California, gave all that the boy Steinbeck required to satisfy his curiosity and his sense of observation. On holidays, he worked on farms in the neighborhood, which helped him to develop intimate knowledge and love of the lush green Valleys and brown-grassed hills of central California. When he was in his late forties, he said,

"I remember my childhood names for grass and secret flowers".⁸

Steinbeck did not have to go outside his long Valley for evidences of the characteristic sickness of modern society. He says,

The merciless 19th century was like a hostile expedition for loot that seemed limitless There has always been more than enough desert in America; the new settlers, like over-indulged children, created even more.⁹

Steinbeck's intellectual interests were encouraged by the well education of his parents. He writes,

Some literature was in the air around me. The Bible I absorbed through my skin. My uncles exuded Shakespeare, and Pilgrim's progress was mixed with my mother's milk.¹⁰

In a letter to Ben Abramson, John Steinbeck has commented on his early readings. He writes that certain books were "realer than experience - Crime and Punishment was like that and Madame Bovary

and parts of Paradise Lost and things of George Eliot and The Return of the Native. I read all these when I was very young and I remember them not at all as books but as things that happened to me.”¹¹

Another very important reading he did during his childhood was Malory’s Morte d’ Arthur. He wrote to C.V. Wicker,

The first book that was my own- was very own- was the Caxton Morte d’ Arthur. I got it when I was nine years old. Over the years I have been more affected by it than by anything else except possibly the King- James Version. Later it caused a fairly intensive study of Anglo- Saxon, old and middle English all of which I suspect have had a profound effect on my prose.¹²

Steinbeck’s literary career spanned four decades. His works including novels, short stories, plays, film scripts and a lot of non-fiction. He was a freelance journalist too. He wrote about poverty, hunger, the sheer struggle for existence, the social outcasts, the misfits of life and the mentally handicapped. He wrote of the underdog; the skilled worker, the exploiter and the exploited; he wrote about the dreams and frustrations of the humble; and above all he wrote of the loneliness of man in society. This wide world of Steinbeck is as full of tragedy and laughter as the world of Dickens. Through all these writings over the years if there was one unifying and common factor it was his Compassion for man. And seeds of compassion were sown in his boyhood and early youth in rural California. In 1924 he contributed two stories to the Stanford Spectator-“Finger of Cloud” and “Adventures in

Arcademy." By 1925, he had read widely- Milton, Browning, Thackeray, George Eliot, D.H.Lawrence, Jeffers, Flaubert, Dostoevsky, Sherwood Anderson etc. During these intervals when he was not in attendance at Stanford, he worked at variety of jobs. He worked on various ranches and worked with labourers who were building the first road below Big Street. At this period he came to believe that the greed of the capitalists and the stupidity of the workers have made it impossible to establish socialism. He developed feelings of revolt against conventional religion. John Bennett in "The Wrath of John Steinbeck or St. John goes to Church" has observed that on Sunday a fellow worker of John Steinbeck took him to Church. Steinbeck broke out from the Congregation saying, "Feed the body and the soul will take care of itself... I don't think much of preaching... go on... you're getting paid for it..."¹³

He underwent a wide range of experience during his life time. His was a childhood soaked in impressions of fertile earth, the mountains and fishing ports of California, sporadic; study at Stanford University, the half enchanted work as a newspaper reporter as also odd jobs like, housepainter, fruit picker, surveyer, caretaker, filled the early decades of the man who at his death was a thrice married father of two children.¹⁴

Despite numerous odds, Steinbeck continued to tread upon hazardous path of becoming a writer of repute. In 1925, he went to New York hoping to make him living as a writer. He had only

three dollars in his pocket when he reached there. His brother in law found a job for him. He had to push wheel barrows of concrete for the construction of Madison Square Garden. Later he got the job of a reporter for the New York American but was discharged after some time. He returned to California working as a deck-hand. In 1926, his three poems were published in Stanford literature. These are humorous poems as their titles also indicate. If Eddie Guese had Written the Book of Job; Happy Birthday, If John A Weaver Had Written Keats's Sonnet in the American Language On Looking at a New Book by Harold Bell Wright, Atropos; Study of a Very Feminine Obituary Editor. In California he took a Job as caretaker of an estate on Lake Tahoe but was soon dismissed when a huge tree fell crashing through a roof. He started working in a nearby fish hatchery. It was at this time he completed his first published novel Cup of Gold. It appeared in 1929, the year of the stock market collapse and the beginning of the great Depression. In this novel he created Henry Morgan, a man destined to greatness, who alienates himself from mankind because of his great ambition but by the end of the novel he loses control of the quest and realizes that the products of his money and power are transient

His second book, The Pastures of Heaven, came out in the autumn of 1932, and has a curious history. It had originally been

accepted by the firm of Brewer, Warren and Putnam. This company went out of business at the moment of publishing the book. But it had aroused the enthusiasm of a member of the firm, Robert O. Ballou, who then brought the novel out on his own. There is a bibliographical confusion about the first edition of The Pastures of Heaven, which bears several imprints. Of the first 2500 sheets, 1650 were published with the Brewer, Warren and Putnam title-page and binding. This is, of course, the legitimate first issue. Ballou took over the remaining 850 sets of unbound sheets, and this is where the confusion begins. Authorities differ as to whether these sheets were used for these more issues, making four altogether, or merely two more, making there in all. Ben Abramson, one Steinbeck authority, counts as second issue whatever copies appeared with Brewer, Warren and Putnam on the spine and a Robert O. Ballou title-page pasted in on the stub of the original. Another authority, the assiduous Steinbeck collector Lawrence Clark Powell (whose check lists have appeared in the Publishers' Weekly, the Book Collector's Packet and the Colophon), has never seen one of these copies of mixed insignia and calls them "merely freaks or strays, not entitled to ranking as separate issues."¹⁵

Powell holds that the second issue is the one with the Ballou binding and tipped-in title page, which Abramson calls the third issue. Ballou didn't have all the 850 sets of sheets rebound, so when Covici-Friede took over Steinbeck's work in 1935, they used the balance of

them, providing their own binding and tipping in their own title page. This may serve as either the third or fourth issue, as you prefer. One thing is certain: the man in all the world who cares least about the question is John Steinbeck. The Pastures of Heaven had been published in London in 1933 by Philip Allan and Company, Ltd. It was still not a money-maker, though it received friendly notices in the press. This didn't increase Steinbeck's respect for the British, but it depended his contempt of American reviewers.

His other novel To a God Unknown (1933) was labelled "mystical" by some reviewers. But it describes the psychological journey by which the protagonist comes to realize his oneness with the cosmos. Tortilla Flat, published in 1935, established him as a writer. The archetypal narrative that he chose for this novel, furnished him with wider opportunities to explain the inexplicable. In this world of sterile ideas and destructive life-styles where the forces of modern life depersonalize human emotions and direct ambitions towards power and profit, he suggested a rechannelling of energies as essential to attain psychological equilibrium. His novel shocked some Californians and made others believe that they had a valuable possession in such picturesque "natives." The book was awarded the annual Gold Medal of the Common Wealth Club of California. Tortilla Flat was bringing enough money to enable Steinbeck to paint his house and refinish the walls and ceilings. Ironically, it was the first Steinbeck's book to make

money. It appeared on best-seller lists for several months, received the California Common Wealth Club's annual gold medal for the best novel by a Californian, was produced as a stage play (unsuccessfully, however), and made into a motion picture. Also it was banned in Ireland and attacked by the Monterey Chamber of Commerce, who, fearing for its tourist trade announced the book was a lie. Its success surprised Steinbeck "I do not see" he wrote to his agents "what even Hollywood can make Tortilla Flat with its episodic treatment."¹⁶

The money from Tortilla Flat made possible at last Steinbeck's trip to Mexico and urged by the "Considerable nuisance" of publicity, he left for Mexico that autumn in a battered second-hand car. He was back before the year's end, and when asked about his trip he replied, "Mexico fades very quickly. I can't remember it very well. I think possibly the people there live on a mental level about equal in depth to our dream level. The contacts I made there are all dreamlike"¹⁷

Although In Dubious Battle was Published in January of 1936, just before the outbreak of a lettuce strike in Salinas, Steinbeck had actually completed that novel a year earlier, three months before the publication of Tortilla Flat in May of 1935. This delay in publication, like that of the previous novel, was caused by his publisher's anxiety about the salability of the book. None of the strike novels of the last two or three years had succeeded, and in addition there was some concern about the language of the book, which Steinbeck refused to

change "A working man bereft of his profanity is a silent man," he wrote:

I have used only those expressions that are commonly used. I hope it won't be necessary to remove them. To try to reproduce the speech of these people and to clean it up is to make it sound stiff, unnatural and emasculated. I think it is vulgar only in the Latin sense.¹⁸

In Dubious Battle was called a "strike-novel" and a "proletarian treatise", but Steinbeck's purpose in this book was more scientific than moral, and more psychological than sociological. The book marks an important development in his consciousness because it is a non-teleological work and an objective psychological portrait of the workers. His short story St. Katy the Virgin, appeared in the same year. A series of eight articles The Harvest Gypsies appeared in San Francisco News which were later printed in pamphlet from Their Blood is Strong in 1938. These articles give a picture of the laborers and migrants during the Depression.

Of Mice and Men (1937) raises Steinbeck to national prominence. It was taken up by Book of the Month Club and its play version won New York Drama Critic Circle Award for the best play of 1937. In this novel also the tone is objective but steinbeck has drawn his characters with love and sympathy and has shown an understanding of their dreams and their loneliness. Later in the year, two stories - The Promise and the Ears of Johny Bear were published in Esquire and The

Chrysanthemums appeared in Harpers. The Long Valley, a collection of short stories, was published in 1938. Many of the stories are connected technically and thematically with his novels. The most common theme throughout the collection is the working of man's mind and consciousness. The Red Pony is out of place in this connection because it is not a series of short stories. It was published in three parts and The Leader of the People was added later to it in 1945. In The Red Pony (1939), Steinbeck has emphasized a young boy's initiation into a world of natural beauty and of natural violence and there is a special emphasis on the realistic depiction of ranch life as a microcosm.

His journey in 1937 from Oklahoma with the migrants resulted in great desperation. His letters to Elizabeth Otis in February and March of 1938, reveal his growing awareness of the plight of the dispossessed "Four thousand families drowned out of their tents are really starving to death ... The death of the children by starvation in our valleys is simply staggering ... If I can sell the articles, I'll use the proceeds for serum and such...."¹⁹ And again; "The floods have aggravated the starvation and sickness. I went down for Life ... They paid my expenses and will put up money for the help of some of these people ... The suffering too great for me to cash in on it ... It is the most heart-breaking thing in the world."²⁰ This explains the origin of The Grapes of Wrath (1939). Perhaps this is one of those rare books of which have created great national controversy. The book received the Pulitzer

Prize, the first annual fiction award of Social Work Today, and the American Book-seller's Association Award.

The Grapes of Wrath was followed by a period of travel, of film making and of journalism. In 1941, he produced Sea of Cortez which records a six -week expedition in the Gulf of California with his friend Ed Ricketts. They were motivated by curiosity and thirst for experience; so the boundaries of the book are wide enough to encompass all their observations, thoughts and feelings. After his return from the Gulf of California, he went to Mexico to study the conditions which he recorded in The Forgotten Village (1941). After 1939 he was seldom at home and made trips to foreign lands- Italy, Greece, France, Russia, Scandinavia, England and North Ireland. He had expressed his deep concern about war in Sea of Cortez and his next two works Bombs Away (1942) and The Moon is Down (1942) are also concerned with war. In 1943, Steinbeck went to Europe as a war correspondent for the New York Herald Tribune. In 1943, he came back home and in 1945 Cannery Row was published. Despite its humour, it is a condemnation of the civilization that creates wars. Beneath the light hearted attack, there is a burning indictment of the sterile ideas of the civilized society. His next two novels The Pearl and The Wayward Bus appeared in 1947. The Pearl is based on a folktale that he had already related in Sea of Cortez. It is a complex morality; hypocrisy and deceitful business practices; sexual perversity and listlessness, self-

doubt and loftness. The Wayward Bus (1947) was selected as The Book of the Month Club book. He published the record of his trip to Russia, in his work A Russian Journal (1948).

In 1950 Burning Bright appeared. It was Steinbeck's third attempt in the play novelette form, and from late in 1949 until its completion in the summer of 1950. The book underwent several thorough revisions and changes of title. It was variously called "In the Forests of the Night," "Tiger, Tiger" and finally Burning Bright. This title was decided upon after Steinbeck had read the proof sheets, which bear the title "In the Forests of the Nights." The fact that all of these titles are from Blake's poem testifies to the affinity Steinbeck must have felt between that poem and his play- novelette.

Unlike his previous experiment in this form, Burning Bright was put on Broadway before being published in novelette form, one month later. Also unlike his previous two experiments, Burning Bright was a miserable failure, running less than two weeks. Critics seemed to view with one another in heaping abuse upon the play. But although at first Steinbeck was puzzled by the failure of Burning Bright, he came to see the book's deficiencies, and it was not included in The Short Novels of John Steinbeck (1953). Four years after the publication of the book he admitted in a private conversation that the play was a failure in writing, that it was too abstract, that it preached too much, and that the audience was always a step ahead of it. He worked on the story and script of

Viva Zapata. In 1951, The Log from the Sea of Cortez was published containing introduction, and narrative from Sea of Cortez and a very moving biography of Ed Rocketts. In 1950 Steinbeck's East of Eden was published. This book, he expected to be his master-piece. He was very enthusiastic about the novel and stated that he had put in it all the things he wanted to write all his life. "It is what I have been practicing to write all my life. Everything has been training." ²¹ This book brought all his ideas together – realism, non-teleological thinking, scientific detachment, personal philosophy, moral concern, cosmic consciousness. Sweet Thursday (1954) has been dismissed by many critics as inferior, sentimental and hence a failure. But if the book is viewed without any previous prejudices, one finds that it is not a mere 'fanciful entertainment' and it has a definite moral purpose behind it.

The publication of his next book A Fabrication; The Short Reign of Pippin IV (1957) surprised many readers but it is a further proof of his versatility. The same year he made a trip to Europe with his wife and his sister. This marks the beginning of serious research into Malory and the Morte D' Arthur. In 1960 he made a three-month trip round U.S.A. His last novel The Winter of Our Discontent appeared in 1961. In his earlier writings, the signs of evil are apparent in different groups of people such as businessmen, ranch-owners etc. or in individuals such as Cathy. But in The Winter of Our Discontent, evil dominates all branches of society. It was selected by Book of the Month

Club. Steinbeck traveled for ten months in Europe and in 1962, his Travels With Charley Was published. He received Nobel Prize for Literature in December, 1962. In 1966, American and Americans was published. This book reveals his passionate love of America and Americans. He has described America as he sees it -its natural wealth, its short comings, the paradoxes of its history and promise of his future. He had the first heart attack in 1961. He had to undergo a back operation in 1967. He had died of heart attack in New York City on December 20, 1968.

Throughout his literary career, Steinbeck continually attempted to reconcile several incompatible views of mankind. It is due to his wealth of themes, forms and techniques that a categorization of his works is a very difficult task. He has successfully merged scientific ideas, social realities, economic thoughts, biological views and non-teleological reflections with moralistic approach, artistic forms and cosmic consciousness. His desire to convey social realities sometimes caused him to over-sympathise with characters who are victims of society to the point of being accused of sentimentality. On the other hand, his tendency to be objective left him to the charge of being too detached. His later fiction is characterized by a predominance of his problems while, in his early works, there is scientific objectivism and subjective social commentary. His Nobel Prize Acceptance Speech very clearly defines the role of a writer;

The ancient commission of the writer has not changed. He is charged with exposing our many grievous faults and failures, with dredging up to the light our dark and dangerous dreams for the purpose of improvement.

"Furthermore, the writer is delegated to declare and to celebrate man's proven capacity for greatness of heart and spirit- for gallantry in defeat-for. courage, compassion and love. In the endless war against weakness and despair, these are the bright rally flags of hope and of emulation.

"I hold that a writer who does not passionately believe in the perfectibility of man has no dedication nor any membership in literature.²²

Steinbeck wrote with his purpose he has advocated. He has exposed the economic system, organized religion, middle class values, businessmen's world, the hazards of war and the way society treats its misfits. He has given vent to feelings of disillusionment many times because of the great depression, economic upheaval and the ethical erosion and he has depicted human existence as a conflict and often as a savage battle but he was essentially an affirmative writer. He has expressed faith in the capacities of men to make life worth- living. The heterogeneous racial structure of the American society, the world of commerce with high -headed business executives engaged in all exclusive worship of goddess success, the world of letters, determined by practicalists and dewy- eyed visionaries, all result in a wide variety

of characteristics in American life and all are represented in the works of John Steinbeck.

Steinbeck has exposed many social evils such as hypocrisy, corruption, violence, unfair business practices and dehumanization. The characters who covet or practise these things are the villains of his fiction. He has portrayed and condemned the social injustices in a number of his novels. He has shown his concern for the less fortunate by emphasizing the way society treats them such as the efforts of the growers in The Grapes of Wrath to reduce the migrants to the level of animals and the sub-human attitude toward retarded misfits. He has condemned the efforts of society to force a hypocritical system of values on all people. Those who do not go with the society's way of thinking are misfits. They are either destroyed or institutionalized by the hostile and uncaring society. Junius Maltby in The Pastures of Heaven is forced to leave his idyllic existence in the valley and the Lopes sisters are condemned for their 'innocent' way of prostitution.

Steinbeck's concern with morality is visible in all his works from Henry Morgan's a morality to Ethan Hawley's conversion to conformity. His criticism of organized religion and conventional morality abounds in such work as Cup of Gold, The Pastures of Heaven, The Pearl and The Winter of Our Discontent. Although he does not criticise anyone's belief in God, he does find fault with certain products of organized religion; intolerance, fear, hypocrisy and greed.

He has found fault in factions of Protestantism as seen in Burton in To a God Unknown and in religious fanaticism as shown in the depiction of the weed patch camp in The Grapes of Wrath. He was neither a pagan nor an atheist. He repeatedly advocated a humanitarian religion based on love and understanding as shown in the character of Jim Casy and the songs of The Pearl. He has established free moral choice for man in East of Eden. He believed that man is capable of great love, only he has to learn his cosmic identity, that is, to learn that he is an integral part of the whole design of existence. He has observed in his Nobel Prize Acceptance speech that "he lived as a writer, to celebrate man's proven capacity for greatness of heart and spirit, courage, compassion and love" and secondly that "a writer who does not believe in the perfectibility of man can not claim to have a true vocation."²³

One must, I believe, recognize certain facts about Steinbeck's writing in order to attain a true perspective, Christian or otherwise, on it. First, from his early stories and novels set in the Salinas Valley of his birth (1902) and first forty years, Steinbeck was a man with message. No doubt because of the easily recognized, often deceptively easy- to define "themes" of his works, he has been a favourite with teachers and critics; despise their obvious disagreements, all are in accord that each Steinbeck novel is trying constantly to prove a point. Second, the vehicle for his didacticism is often allegory, sometimes recognizable, occasionally private and veiled, not unlike that of

Melville or Hawthorne. Even his most "realistic" fiction is heavily saturated with allusion - mythological, archetypal, historical and biblical. To deny this fact, as many have, is to underrate the artistic achievement of this Nobel prizewinning author. Finally, one should realize that from his first novel, Cup of Gold (1929), to his last work of fiction, The Winter of Our Discontent (1961), Steinbeck was predominantly even obsessively-concerned with religion and the religious experience in our time. Attesting to this fact are the very titles of his major stories and novels, among them To a God Unknown (1932), The Pastures of Heaven (1932), "St. Katy the Virgin" (1936), The Grapes of Wrath (1939), East of Eden (1952). Others such as The Pearl (1947), Sea of Cortez (1941), Burning Bright (1950), and The Wayward Bus (1947) deal directly with major religious themes; and the plethora of characters, places, comments and events that consider or derive from religious subjects demonstrates his continuing concern with the doctrines and the practices of twentieth - century Christianity.

Steinbeck preferred to speak through his works. Avoiding publicity whenever possible, he wrote little about his extended trip to Vietnam, where he observed the war as he did World War II (the result then was Bombs Away in 1942). From 1961 until his death on December 20, 1968, writing Travels with Charley (1962), a non fiction account of a cross country trip, and America and Americans (1966), a panoramic illustrated depiction (later televised) of contemporary life, replaced his

output of a novel nearly every year. For Steinbeck's religious concern is not with one belief, one doctrine, one faith. Christianity and its traditions form a major base for his fiction, but what we shall call his dual method of parable and syncretic allegory enables him to universalize his major themes in a manner for which he is not usually given enough credit.

Steinbeck's basic attitude towards the human race, and man's often futile attempts to understand and accept the continuing existence of both good and evil are told and retold, in short story, drama and novel. And because Steinbeck is so constantly aware of the forms that the awareness of good and evil takes, the reader must constantly distinguish between subject and method, for it is only with full awareness of Steinbeck's dual role as religious theorist and artist that one can fully comprehend a given work. He once said,

What some people find in religion, a writer may find in his craft ... absorption of the small and frightened and lonely into the whole and complete, a kind of breaking through to glory,²⁴

The above survey of Steinbeck's fictional and non-fictional writings reveal that the most significant ideas he dwelt upon are belief in the primary and inalienable rights of man, in the importance of the individual and in human solidarity and brotherhood, defiance of tradition and disregard for all external authority, distrust of organised religion and priesthood, contempt for greed and lust for possession,

preference for a simple unaffected way of life based on rural, agrarian culture having self-reliance and small proprietorship. Large and varied segments of American life, which have remained neglected for long, get a sharp focus in his fiction. Starting with his first novel Cup of Gold (1929) and continuing through his last work, The Winter of Our Discontent (1961), Steinbeck has actually presented man engaged in the process of living, making efforts to rise above an individuality which stops him from becoming a group animal and trying, as a group, to maintain his individuality. He appears to believe that the story of mankind is an unbending cycle of frustration and remorse. People never change until they face extinction but rather they create problems for those who try to better the human condition.

Steinbeck is actually a humanist who has brought out the simmering discontent of the day in his works. From dark days of Depression (1929-33) till the very end of his life, he thought about human problems and crisis- ridden civilization and raised his voice against what he considered wrong, unnatural, arbitrary, oppressive and immoral. Though he was mistaken for a communist and branded as a bitter critic of the Establishment, he actually belonged to the group of the "loyal opposition."

Steinbeck is no doubt an idealist and optimist. He is at the same time a pragmatist too. Influenced by mystical transcendentalism of Emerson (1803-1882) and the pragmatic instrumentalism of William

James (1882-1910) and John Dewey (1859-1952), he sets before us very simple ideals which are the need of the hour. James Gray has thus remarked on his roll as a critic of society:

...no other writer of our time has found so many ways of reminding us that man must be the beneficiary of his institutions, not their victim. His best work dramatises the plight of man how tragically, how humorously with the aid of challenge, irony, homely eloquence and subtle insight-as he indomitably struggles to make his environment a protective garment, not a hair-cloth shirt.²⁵

All the above expressed views and quite a few more have been quite clearly enunciated in his Non Fictional works. Among his non fictional works Sea of Cortez (1951) is actually " a statement of Steinbeck's point of view, the interpretation of man and society which he expressed in his novels of the Thirties and Forties."²⁶ Steinbeck's organismic theory of groups which owed more to Biology than to political Theory has been discussed in detail. W.C. Allee's Animal Aggregations (1931) played a significant role in shaping this theory. To Steinbeck a human group is a single organism. It is the colonial animal like pelagic tunicate. While speaking of the schools, Steinbeck extends the conception from organized groups to whole species, to ecological communities to all life. And hence the state or national society as a single animal, is but an organ of a larger single animal, the human species, and that in turn is an organ of the single animal which is the biosphere. Actually the whole world is a single organism.

Steinbeck another wellknown shaping speculation which is discussed in detail in this book is his Non-teleological or "is" thinking. This philosophical speculation serves to be the foundation of his social Darwinism, organismic theory, and chain of- Being. This type of thinking seems to be the mixture of philosophical relativism, the rigorous refusal of the scientist to be dogmatic about hypotheses, and a sort of moral fatalism. To quote :

Non-teleological ideas derive through "is" thinking, associated with natural selections as Darwin seems to have understood it. They imply depth, fundamentalism, and clarity-seeing beyond traditional or personal projection. They consider events as out growths and expressions rather than as results; conscious acceptance as a desideratum, and certainly as an all important prerequisite. Non-teleological thinking concerns itself primarily not with what should be, or could be, or might be, but rather with what actually "is" – attempting atmost to answer the already sufficiently difficult questions what or how instead of why.²⁷

Like Sea of Cortez, Travels with Charley in Search of America (1962) is Steinbeck's introspective study of men and materials for his recent fiction. In Sea of Cortez, Steinbeck's universe was actually the tide pool. In Travels with Charley, Steinbeck looks for the American dreams, virtues and the glory of the pioneers among the moderns . This travelogue reflects his concerns for the morals, the disease of "an ethics," and a certain element of hate, in the lives of his country men. In his another book, America and Americans (1966) Steinbeck,

nodoubt, expresses these and similar anxieties about his country and the people. Steinbeck expresses his anguish over the falling standards of living amidst peace and prosperity. The public philosophy of " the fast buck" is dwelt upon in detail here. The curse of racial hatred also finds detailed discussion in this and other writings.

The present study in the following five chapters intends to examine the non-fictional writings of John Steinbeck. During the four decades of his literary career, Steinbeck has constantly reacted to the social attitudes and changing values without caring for his personal gains or losses. His writings steam with anger at injustice, with hatred for self-pity, with bitter attacks and scorn for the cunning and self-righteousness and also the system that encourages exploitation, greed and brutality. An effort will be made in the succeeding study to bring to light his concept of man, his philosophical ideals such as Non-teleological or "Is" thinking and the Theory of group organism. His views about his great country's Democracy, Dream and Westward movement will also be examined. The problem of racial discrimination between the Blacks and the Whites will also form the part of study. As a writer always trying to reach perfection, Steinbeck constantly experimented certain views on the art of fiction which will also be incorporated in this study. Since Steinbeck has used myths and legends as artistic devices to enrich meaning, to universalize themes of topical interest, to draw parallels and to establish contrasts for ironic exposure

of pretensions and moral degradations, an attempt will also be made to evaluate them on the basis of clues provided in his prefaces, forewords and prologues and also letters written to his friends, agents and publishers. Critical opinions already available will also be thoroughly probed and used to substantiate insights and findings.

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CHAPTER 2

IMAGE OF MAN

John Steinbeck believed that "man is a double thing, a group animal and at the same time an individual... he can not successfully be the second until he has fulfilled the first"¹ This concept of man informs the meaning and controls the artistic material of Steinbeck's writings throughout his career as a writer. Starting with his first novel Cup Of Gold (1929), and continuing through his last work, The Winter of Our Discontent (1961), Steinbeck shows man caught up in the process of living, trying to rise above an individuality which prevents him from becoming a group animal, and trying, as a group animal, to retain his individuality. The concept, it seems, has three parts – man as just an individual, man as a group animal, and man as a "successful" individual, or ideal man. When man becomes a successful individual in Steinbeck, he attains dignity.

Steinbeck's image of man can be studied conveniently under four conventional aspects : man's relationship to a physical world in which he finds himself; man's relationship to a metaphysical world which may be; man's relationship to a social world which he creates; and finally, man as a distinct and ideal individual. In Steinbeck's best works these facets of his image of man find expressions in each of the technical aspects such as choices of myhhical structure, legends, protagonists, imagery and prose style. In Dubious Battle (1936) and The Grapes of Wrath (1939) can be cited as the best examples exhibiting technical perfection and his image of man.

John Steinbeck's writings unfold an image of man characterised by comprehensiveness, complexity and variety. It helps in visualising in general the major drives and motivation in human life. This image has also the universality of appeal, even though Steinbeck views life through a predominant American

perspective. Further this image gives unity as well as continued relevance to the fictional microcosm of Steinbeck.

Edmund Fuller has rightly emphasised the significance of such an image;

All fiction is comment upon the life and nature of man – though not necessarily consciously so... The writer can not be wholly coherent artist, unless he possesses a wholly coherent view of man to inform, illuminate and integrate his work.²

Such a picture of man projected in modern fiction is “the abivious product of despairing self hatred, extended from the individual self to the whole race of man, with its accompanying will to degradation and humiliation”³

Steinbeck’s is an image of man which uplifts us and makes us aware of the potentialities inherent in us. It helps to sustain our sagging spirit and beckons us to distant and unsuspected possibilities, His method of apprehending reality and his humanistic and compassionate perspective condition and influence this image of man.

In his novels up to Burning Bright (1950), Steinbeck’s physical image of man is of an animal capable of reason, but otherwise not clearly distinguishable except in the denotation of his genius and species. Man may pursue goals a little more abstract than those pursued by other species, but the motivation for such pursuits are not essentially different. In his very first novel Cup of Gold, Steinbeck speculates that his youthful hero’s yearning to leave Wales and seek his fortune in the world “was a desire for a thing he could not name. Perhaps the same force moved him which collected the birds into exploring parties and made the animals sniff up-wind for the scent of winter.”⁴ Steinbeck does not shrink from the logic of extending this understanding of individual motivation to man in general: In Sea of Cortez, he thus posits his view :

When two crayfish meet, they usually fight. One would say that perhaps they might not at future time, but without some mutation it is not likely that they will lose this trait. And perhaps our species is not likely to forego war without some psychic mutation which is present, at least, does not seem imminent. And if one places the blame for killing and destroying on economic insecurity, on inequality, on injustice, he is simply stating the preposition in another way. We have what we are. Perhaps the crayfish feels the itch of jealousy, or perhaps he is sexually insecure. The effect is that he fights.⁵

The above statement is merely the explicit setting forth of a physical image which can be copiously illustrated from the novels preceding it. Joseph Wayne's reflections on the ecological relationship of eels, pigs, mountain lions and man in To a God Unknown, (1933) Grandfather's statements about the motivations of the pioneers in The Red Pony and Doc Burton's explanations of mob action in In Dubious Battle, significantly contribute to such an understanding.

Early in A Russian Journal (1948) Steinbeck writes that "the hardest thing in the world for a man is the simple observation of what is"⁶ But in The Log, he was able to observe 'what is' and still fuse thought and things into an integrated nucleus with dimension and tone. In A Russian Journal, Steinbeck and Capa simply report what they saw. Since the volume is a minor work which tells us what the Russian people wear, what they serve at dinner, how they dance and sing and play, it really does little to help us achieve a fuller understanding of either the scenes described or the minds of the describers.

As a writer Steinbeck belongs broadly to the naturalistic school. He has imbibed the best elements of American naturalism. As Charles Child Walcott has pointed out,

The two great elements of American naturalism —spirit and fact, the demands of the heart and the demands of the mind—are Steinbeck's constant preoccupation; they form the poles of his thought in everyone of his novels.⁷

In Steinbeck there is an endeavour to blend rebellious progressivism with determinism. Actually out of the naturalistic heritage, Steinbeck forged a powerful and effective kind of realism which is both human and forward looking. He is in certain respects akin to Maxim Gorky's Socialist Realism. As Alfred Kazin remarks, Steinbeck,

Standing apart from both contemporary naturalists and the new novel of sensibility that one finds in Faulkner and Wolfe, brought a fresh note into contemporary fiction because he promised a realism less terror-ridden than the Depression novel, yet consciously responsible to society.⁸

Steinbeck's realism has a constructive quality; it is affirmative in tone. It thrives on hopeful and optimistic spirit, unlike Emile Zola's. The latter's approach is mechanistic and grossly materialistic. Steinbeck's endeavour is not only to study phenomena with scientific exactitude, but also to search behind facts for a philosophical resolution of their complexity. In this respect he resembles Thomas Mann who is the outstanding example in Europe of purposeful and significant realism. Like Mann who presents an example of novelist as thinker, Steinbeck also belongs to that school. It is the super adding of the speculative element which distinguishes Steinbeck's realism. In fact he has assimilated the intellectual tradition of the great American writers, brought it up-to-date and invested it with a contemporary relevance. As Frederick Carpenter points out, in him "the mystical transcendentalism of Emerson reappears and the earthy democracy of Whitman and the pragmatic instrumentalism of William James and John Dewey".⁹

Steinbeck's realism is evident in all aspects of his art like theme, characterization, setting and style. He chooses invariably the lives of ordinary human beings and portrays those aspects of experience which are of everyday occurrence. In his earliest novel, Cup of Gold, he deals with a pseudo-historical tale. But the theme of loneliness and alienation is a universal one which high and low feel and experience. In other novels too, Steinbeck portrays the rough and arduous exertions of ordinary human beings to survive in a hostile and uncongenial environment. In To A God Unknown, he pictures the spiritual quests of ordinary mortals to identify their religious propensities. Nature and society are invariable the backdrop in his works. While The Pastures of Heaven, East of Eden etc. have the Californian landscape as their setting, the strike novel, the stories of the itinerant farm hands and migrant workers are seen in the background of an inequitable system of property ownership and exploitation of the weaker sections. These novels are perfect examples of creative realism, not only in form and theme but also in characterisation and style. Except in Cup of Gold, in all other novels Steinbeck's style, which is simple, effective and vigorous, moves in harmony with his theme and characterization.

Thus Steinbeck's realism is of a class by itself. It enables him to portray American life with a vividness and immediacy found only seldom in modern fiction. In many others realism as a technique serves to cramp the author's vision, and restricts it to a narrow segment of life. On the other hand Steinbeck's realism provides amplitude and comprehensiveness.

The Nobel Prize citation acclaimed Steinbeck

As an independent expounder of the truth with an unbiased instinct for what is genuinely American, be it good or wicked...He likes to contrast the simple joy of

life with the brutal and cynical craving for money. But in him we find the American temperament also expressed in his great feeling for nature, for the tilled soil, the wasteland and the mountains and the ocean coasts.¹⁰

This unique understanding of man and life is made possible because of a special quality of his realism. It is ambivalence, he has a divided vision which keeps him artistically at an uncommitted distance. This enables him to see life and to envisage the human predicament with disinterestedness and impartiality. Indeed amateur biology and scientific bias have endowed him with a non-teleological perspective. This has added an additional dimension to his realism. Consequently he sees life steadily and as a whole. Hence he apprehends rightly the inherent conflict in life which often drives a man to the brink of tragedy. Behind Steinbeck's lambent pessimism can be discerned a realisation of this tragic potentiality. But this does not atrophy his love of life: nor does it lessen the zest and vigour with which he portrays it. Because of this double vision which oscillates between laughter and tears, his understanding becomes all the more penetrating and consequently his portrayals of typical situations in life are suffused with a warmth and immediacy which produces spontaneous recognition and delight. Steinbeck's brand of realism helps him to comprehend a variety of situational stresses which even ordinary, unheroic natures are also subjected to. In other words he apprehends the heroic even in ordinary human beings. This is a democratic extension of sensibility.

Suffering and failure result from the inability of the individual to measure up to the conflicting pulls which encompass him. The successful ones are those who survive with marginal discomfiture. Such characters manage to stay within an uncommitted middle distance. They observe men and situations with a wise

passivity and try to influence the irresistible course of life by choosing with discrimination, while accepting the built in limitations of life caused by environment, inherent flaws of character and the arbitrariness of chance.

As an artist, Steinbeck's standpoint is also affected by this dichotomy. His circumscribed, ambivalent stance gives to his realism pressure and strength. In more than one sense Steinbeck is a committed writer, involved totally in the cause of the common man. Hence he cannot escape moral involvement. But his artistic 'negative capability' impels him to withhold commitment. This conflict has generated much heat and energy in his mechanism of sensibility. To contain as well as assimilate this energy, Steinbeck is compelled to seek the side of the inexhaustible source of all power namely nature and primitivism. This makes him a fabulist who exploits myths and fables for objectifying his vision of life by a process of extended symbolization of the existential stresses of contemporary life. His realism manifests itself invariably through allegory and symbolism. Even in his most distanced work, In Dubious Battle, there is Biblical symbolism and Miltonic echoes of unjust contention of the fallen angels against God. The Old Testament parallelism of the main action of The Grapes of Wrath and East of Eden enhance their artistic and ideological significance.

The esthetic distance which Steinbeck adopts in his works is a salient feature of his realism. In this respect Reloy Garcia discerns similarity between D.H. Lawrence and Steinbeck. Both have a divided vision arising from ambivalence.

It is the ambivalence, this evolving conflict between the public man and the private person, this conflict between social and political immersion, and an

opposing inclination to withdraw, that shapes their work and which gave esthetic distance.¹¹

Steinbeck's realism is satisfying because it provides illumination and delight. It is affirmative in nature and induces acceptance of life. Never does it sponsor defeatism. This is a trait which he shares with the great masters of European fiction. As with them, Steinbeck's primary concern is with life itself. Form and convention, allegory and myth, are means to an end namely to visualize his image of men. Even scientific concepts help in interpreting life. Biology assists him in formulating his ideas about group psyche and mass psychology. Like George Bernard Shaw, he makes use of Darwinian Evolution in understanding the rhythm of progress. The great books of the world like The Bible and Hindu Scriptures, transcendental concepts like Emerson's Oversoul, help to confirm him in his great faith in human perfectibility. Study of nature and biology enables him to see man in his relational background. His purposeful realism gives vistas of man's enviable role in the universal scheme of things. Indeed in his realism and art, Steinbeck reveals a close affinity to Chekhov and Dickens, both of whom studied and portrayed man with sympathy and insight. He has also imbibed the philosophical realism of Leo Tolstoy who wrote with the unreflecting conviction that men ultimately are more like than unlike one another.

Steinbeck's humanism is another factor which conditioned his image of man. It is the king-pin of his artistic vision. His humanism manifests itself as an undiscriminating love for man and for all his work. This love also makes itself explicit negatively as protest, moral indignation and a tragic sense of failure, besides in its constant and ever present form of compassion. Born out of this instinctive love is his optimism and a fond faith in a millennium. While

contemporary literature wallowed in despondency and scepticism, Steinbeck maintained a sturdy faith in abiding human values.

Steinbeck's humanism made him a bitter critic of the Establishment and this made many mistake him for a communist. The only intelligent interpretation is that he was more far-sighted than many. He observed the simmering discontent of the day and saw in it the symptoms of a more serious malady, which has blighted the life pattern of present day America. As James Gray notes,

Steinbeck accepted as early as the 1930s the obligation to take a stand in his writing against tendencies in the American way of life to which the campus rebels of the present have been making vigorous objection.¹²

The dissidents of Tortilla Flat, (1935), Cannery Row (1945) and Sweet Thursday (1954) are, according to James Gray, forerunners of the hippie generation of today. In his Nobel Acceptance speech, Steinbeck reiterated the duty of the writer "to declare and to celebrate man's proven capacity for greatness of heart and spirit, for gallantry in defeat, for courage, compassion and love"¹³. He asserted that the ancient commission of the writer has not changed. The writer's task is the exposing of man's grievous faults and failures, and the dredging up to the surface our dark and dangerous dreams, for the purpose of improvement. He declared that the danger and the glory and the choice rest finally in man. He summed up thus:

Man himself has become our greatest hazard and our only hope, so that to-day St. John the apostle may well be paraphrased: In the end is the *word* and the word is *man* and the word is with *men*.¹⁴

Steinbeck envisages man as a complex creature with a multitude of drives and motives. The paradoxical and often mutually exclusive motives are characteristic of this highly evolved being. The inhibitions he suffers from and

the inadequacies, which blur his noble nature fascinate rather than repel Steinbeck. Indeed the less fortunate and more malformed among the species evoke more of his sympathy and considerate attention. To him man is preeminently a "two-legged paradox"¹⁵.

Steinbeck's humanism is essentially an inclusive one. Not only man but also his handiwork to the extent that it is helpful to his existence is welcome and acceptable to him. Through influenced by Thoreau in his pantheism and nature worship, Steinbeck is not an enemy of machine. He welcomes it if it is a help and a blessing and condemns it when it becomes the enemy and oppressor of the wage earner. In The Grapes of Wrath Steinbeck indulges in a tirade against the tractor which pulls down the hearths and homes of the share croppers. It is an infernal machine in the hands of the exploiters to drive away the sons of the soil. Here the machine is the minion of a diabolical system. But the Jalopy which the Joads buy and rebuild to help them ferry themselves across the desert to the promised land is a lovable agent of survival. It becomes the new hearth and the living center of the family. It is almost made human by its symbolic significance and becomes a minor character in the novel. Juan Chicoy's run down wayward bus, Adam's Model T Ford, Doc's ancient automobile and Lee Chong's truck which Mack and the boys take on their frog-hunting expedition are examples of machines with no diabolical attributes.

One of the basic aspects of Steinbeck's humanism is its forward looking qualify. It is entrenched deeply in optimism. But this faith in progress and evolutionary perfection is not absolute. With his ambivalent perspective he could easily guess that progress is slow and tardy. The way man is made ensures error

and failure. But the endeavour is always there. It is this effort which is the true measure of the progress achieved. In his masterpiece, The Grapes of Wrath, Steinbeck avers:

This you say of man- when theories change and crash, when schools, philosophies, when narrow dark alleys of thought, national, religious, economic, grow and disintergrate, man reaches, stumbles forward, painfully, mistakenly sometimes. Having stepped forward he may slip back, but only half a step, never the full step back.¹⁶

The above passage reminds us of Lenin's famous dictum "Two steps forward; one step back"¹⁷. Further it echoes Emerson, who saw human progress in a "zigzag line of a hundred tacks,"¹⁸ which, when seen from a "sufficient distance", straightens itself out; beneath the variety, the lack of pattern, there is a harmonious agreement which occurs with a little height of thought.

Steinbeck's humanism is an ethically committed one which enjoins upon man to do unto others as he would do unto himself. It puts a great burden and responsibility on him. Steinbeck upholds the stern voice of duty and in his creative endeavours he has lived up to it. He declares this will and testament of his in a casual way in his least serious work, Sweet Thursday.

Men seem to be born with a debt they can never pay, no matter how hard they try. It piles up ahead of them. Man owes something to man. If he ignores the debt it poisons him, and if he tries to make payments the debt only increases, and the quality of his gift is the measure of the man.¹⁹

By observing life from an objective distance, he notes life's zigzag course and recognizes a harmonious agreement on basic values. He communicates this vision through his fiction. He studies man because man is the measure of everything. And in studying man he makes intelligent use of all that has so far

been thought and known. Marxian socialism and Emersonian transcendentalism are the two poles of his survey. In between lies Dewey's pragmatism, Darwinian biology, Freudian psychoanalysis and Einsteinian Relativity. Fostered and led by these major guidelines, Steinbeck envisions an image of life and man which is comprehensive and all embracing.

Steinbeck's image of man is as complex and fascinating as American life itself; it reflects the same vitality and ebullience. An irrepressible zest for life is what characterises it. It has strength, credibility and an onward thrust. Further it fully personifies the hopes and aspirations of the common man. With the help of biological analogy, he unravels the impulses and motivation of man in the mass and adduces certain strange conclusions about the survival qualities of the species. He comments on the success and failure of human beings by studying social organisms in the light of observed biological phenomena.

The biological bias has exposed him to the charge that he has an animalizing tendency. There is a general stricture voiced by discriminating critics like Edmund Wilson that he succeeds best in portraying animal natures. Edmund Magny-Claude observes how Steinbeck "has an extraordinary power to catch and paint man in his most elementary terms,...those that bring him closer to other men or even to other beings."²⁰

It is true that in his earlier novels, as Prof. Lisca notes, Steinbeck succeeds "in exploring and giving new significance to those aspects, which in the hands of earlier naturalistic writers had resulted only in the degrading of man".²¹ Steinbeck did so, apparently with a preconceived purpose he thought it "valid to understand man as an animal before I was prepared to know him as a man".²²

Steinbeck images man with nature as his foil. The flora and fauna provide an exalted background to his picture of humanity in action. Indeed man seems to imbibe a part of the elemental strength they possess. From them Steinbeck draws much of his imagery. The most unforgettable among such symbolic representations is that of the turtle in *The Grapes of Wrath*.

The image of man in Steinbeck's works is unique because it is a steadily amplifying one. It grows and spreads to become more inclusive. It "progresses physiologically and morally from the self-centered child view to the family view to the world view."²³ The image itself partakes of an evolutionary quality. Its source is his amateur scientific interest. "With his deep amateur interest in biology, it gave him the necessary detachment and slow curiosity to approach the modern social struggle as a tragic-comedy of animal instincts."²⁴ Embler rightly says that Steinbeck deduced not only his method but also his philosophy of life from the natural sciences :

In Steinbeck's search for a social philosophy which could meet the problems of his day, he turned for assistance to the biological sciences. In these he found sound method, tested hypothesis, and if it could be translated in to language of human behaviour, a body of usable information about sub-human life.²⁵ Steinbeck's method was so successful that the social thinking of many readers has been affected by it. But in his later work it is philosophy and religion which produce a stronger impact on his image of man.

It is true that some of the most memorable characters in Steinbeck are those simple and elementary natures who are incomplete human beings, existing in a state of arrested growth. In matter of intellect and social reciprocity, they are primitive and primordial. In many respects they are no better than animals. They

represent the image of man at the lowest and most unsophisticated level. Under this broad group come the paisanos, bums like Mack and the boys, the imbeciles, idiots, the criminally insane and even the whores. These characters are drawn with such a sure touch that they become alive and independent. Many among them are most memorable in Steinbeck. Johnny Bear and Tularecito in the short stories of The Long Valley, the pirate of Tortilla Flat, the crazed radicals of In Dubious Battle are most convincing specimens of mediocrity and under-development. The mentally retarded giant, Lennie, of Of Mice and Men is an allegorical figure for the unreformed spirit of man. Danny Taylor, the alcoholic of The Winter of Our Discontent, shows how man can relapse back into unreason because of enslavement to temptation. The unbefriended child, Frankie, of Cannery Row (1945) is depicted with great pathos and compassion. Thomas of To A God Unknown shows how even with animal-like instinct humans hope to live useful lives.

Along with the turtle and white quail, nellie and red pony of domestic and wild life, Steinbeck's subhuman types are delineated with sympathy understanding and compassion. Among them the bums and paisanos show greater awareness of the complex issues of life. Their primitivism is also a partly purposeful armour against annihilation. Instinct helps them to choose a way of life which alone ensures their survival in a hostile social set up. With an understanding of ecological and environmental factors, Steinbeck pictures them as an integral and inevitable part of life. Previously they were ostracized and discriminated against as unfit for portrayal unless it was for purposes of caricature or symbolism. Steinbeck has allotted them their due place in the panorama of life

and has pictured them with compassion and understanding . This is major reason for the vitality of his image of man .

Apart from these beings, there are those who are normal in the sense that they have a properly evelved consciousness as human beings. Among them we note three broad categories and they happen to be important subsections in Steinbeck's image of man.

First of all there are human beings who are suffering from illusions of different types. Some of them are out and out egoists who indulge their material and spiritual hallucinations in erratic and eccentric ways. Henry Morgan is after wealth and glory and surrenders even humanity in his overreaching pursuit of them . Faustlike he fails ignominiously and pursued towards the end by frustration and loneliness. Joseph Wayne's egoistical obsession is of another kind. It has a spiritual undertone. He seeks after the God to be propitiated for assuring fertility and continuity of life. His is an elevated spiritual quest. Its culmination is in a powerful sense of identification with nature. Such romantic idealists are destined to be disillusioned. By depicting such Napoleonic natures, Steinbeck identifies the megalomaniac element in man and rejects by implication the credibility of such bloated individualism.

After rejecting such dominating natures as the exception and not the rule, Steinbeck portrays ordinary human beings who are harassed and destroyed by petty illusions. Such people he visualizes in The Pastures of Heaven. They clash with the norms of social conduct and are shaken thoroughly into conformity. The demands of group existence impinge on their ostrich-like natures and compel them to adjust themselves to the accepted codes of conduct and behaviour.

"Shark" Wicks, Pat Humbert, Helen Van Deventer, John Whiteside etc. among the Valley's inhabitants are haunted by an 'evil cloud' impersonated in Bert Munroe.

Steinbeck rejects this type of man, both of the egocentric and humdrum type, who are the ultimate failures as individual human beings.

The next aspect of study in Steinbeck's image of man concerns the group and the individual's place in it. Tortilla Flat, In Dubious Battle, Of Mice and Men, The Grapes of Wrath, Cannery Row, The Moon is Down and The Wayward Bus are studies of group life. They envision the strange predicaments and predilections of individuals in collective life. Except East of Eden and The Winter of Our Discontent all the major works of Steinbeck are forged around the thematic pattern of group existence.

Steinbeck visualizes different kinds of groups. The earliest is in Tortilla Flat. Danny and the other paisanos together represent a distinct group. It is collective action and group morality which hold the group together. It is a group with inverted values meant to ridicule and burlesque those of the so-called civilised group. Such ironic intention is discernible also in the groups of Cannery Row and Sweet Thursday. Mack and the boys are meant as an incriminating foil to the sophisticated sections. In both these groups, there is a leader- Danny and Doc respectively. With Danny's final fling and his death from a broken neck, the modern Round Table breaks up. With the successful party to Doc and his marriage to Suzy, the group of Mack and the boys reaches a happy consummation in their efforts.

Both these groups are integrated ones in the sense that groups and leaders work with identical motives. In Dubious Battle introduces a new phenomenon namely the group animal. It is exploited by an alien leadership. Their aims and objectives differ. In fact these are antithetical. The group throws up its leader. But they become just cat's-paw in the hands of the professional agitators, Mac and Jim. The group itself degenerates into an awe-inspiring manifestation of the irrational in man. The distorted groups ethos of the striking fruit pickers brings into being a frightening Frankenstein monster. It is the natural offshoot of unmitigated exploitation, fear complex, Machiavellian leadership and the adoption of violence as an end in itself. The irrational and insane are incarnate in the group-animal. Its personalised manifestation is Lennie of Of Mice and Men. George stands for the protecting and preserving leadership which arises from within and which alone can guarantee the wholeness and healthiness of the group.

Gregariousness is a major impulse of man. Steinbeck considers collective action of the group as a fundamental aspect of his image of man. As Karl Marx said, "Man is not only a social animal, but an animal that can develop into an individual only in society".²⁶ But the group animal, subject to symptoms of mass hysteria and led astray by self-seeking and unscrupulous leadership imposed from outside, is rejected by Steinbeck. He considers it a pernicious transformation which does more harm than good.

It is not accidentally that in The Grapes of Wrath, Steinbeck makes the family take the place of the group. He visualises the ordeals and misfortunes of the migrant Okies in concrete terms by turning the searchlight on the Joads. It is a typical evacuee group. The family is the nucleus of society. It is a mould which

casts the individual. Hereafter Steinbeck studies social movements and the growth and maturation of individual consciousness exclusively through the perspective of the family. The family is the basic democratic unit. It is where a true trusteeship is in action. The family ensures the fullest growth of all elements in it. Further it is where the woman plays a crucial role as mother and wife. Perhaps the strongest sustaining and fostering influence in life is that of woman.

The Joad family is a representative family. It outlives its vicissitudes and unites with similar family units to usher in a co-operative, democratic pattern of life. Life in the Federal Government camp gives a foretaste of an ideal social order. In The Moon is Down the subdued nation groaning under the heels of the fascist invader is egged on by the example of their elected leader to take up the challenge and fight. Mayor Orden is like a patriarch who heads a big, intimate family group which this highly traditional and integrated nation resembles. In the topsy-turvy world of Cannery Row family life almost suffers total atrophy. Its place is appropriated by the whorehouse. In all novels hereafter Steinbeck conceives family as the burning heart of social relationship. Like Ma Joad, most of the women characters-Juana, Mordeen, Liza Hamilton- proclaim the seminal importance of woman in group life.

The third factor in Steinbeck's image of man is his idea of the leader, Sometimes leadership assumes heroic proportion; it also takes the form of the anti-hero. In fact we come across different categories of leadership, with fluctuating potential for good or evil. Morgan and Joseph are not leaders. They stand for two distinct varieties of megalomania. Both remain outside the group and hence isolated from it. The earliest hint about the constructive role of the

leader is Danny of *Tortilla Flat*. As long as Danny was alive the group remained intact.

The leadership issue gains urgency in *In Dubious Battle*. Party minions lead the credulous fruit pickers into the abyss of mass suicide. Leaders emerge from the ranks; but they become plastic tools in the hands of the professional agitators. The relationship between the leader and the led is ideally portrayed in *Of Mice and Men*. Lennie is like the irate group-animal. He is blind, unreformed brute force. George is the intellective factor which directs and controls its complement.

This reciprocal relationship between the leader and the led is palpable in all its subtlety in *The Grapes of Wrath*. Steinbeck's idea of leadership is important because it is a basic aspect of his image of man. Ideally leadership must emerge from within. Then only can it feel the pulse of the group and act with maximum utility. Jim Casy, Tom and Ma Joad are leaders thrown up by the intriguing compulsions of circumstance. They have a down to earth quality because they are of the group and hence they reflect its hopes and aspirations. Being the wife and mother, Ma Joad is the nucleus of the family. She is thus a natural leader. In fact Ma Joad is like an emanation from the earth, endowed with the qualities of wisdom, patience and love which we attribute to Mother Earth. The most idealized leader of Steinbeck is Mayor Orden. Because of his inherited tradition and built-in democratic approach, he is a perfect, self surrendering leader. Added to that there is a subtle and discriminating understanding of self. Leaders of such eminence and nobility are conceived as the finished products of truly civilised group existence. Theirs is the freedom of choice which great humanists like

Socrates have exercised. Through Lee of East of Eden, Steinbeck identifies it as the privilege immanent in the Biblical sanction, "Thou Mayest". In Cal and Abra, we discover these nascent qualities of understanding and acceptance. They have proved powers of initiative as well as qualities of leadership which alone will guarantee success in life. True leadership is also fostered by democratic humanism.

In Steinbeck's idea of leadership there is no place for the conventionally heroic. Through Morgan and Joseph he rejects that as a psychological abnormality. If the sum total of life is a tragi-comedy of good intentions lost in cross purposes, no one can afford to be a true hero. Doc is perhaps the one character whom Steinbeck admires most. The biographical sketch on Ed Ricketts celebrates him as half- Christ, half satyr. In these unheroic times Doc is an anti-hero by choice. Doc Burton, the non-teleological chorus of In Dubious Battle, is transformed into a quizzical and eccentric being who keeps himself intact in a wicked world by a deliberate posture of indifference and unconventionality. The image of this anti-hero suffers further atrophy in Sweet Thursday where he is portrayed as confused and crestfallen because of the compulsive need for adjustment in a rapidly changing world. In a mood of self-pity and disgust, Steinbeck destroys the image of this non-conformist hero and makes him toe the line of the vulgar and eccentric world around, by "happily" uniting him with a reformed whore.

The typical leaders of Steinbeck share in common a capacity for "is" thinking. They are endowed with a broader outlook and a better grasp of the rationalities of life than others. They are non-teleological in their reality

assessment. Coeur de Gris is the earliest example. Joseph Wayne also lives up to this image of the wide eyed observer who sees things without blinders . Casy, Slim of *Of Mice and Men*, Dr.Winter and, above all ,Lee and Samuel Hamilton of *East of Eden* belong to this category of a wise passive and sympathetic spectator of the human comedy who outlives narrow prejudices to attest to the infinite variety of life with understanding acceptance.

Steinbeck's characters, especially the more developed and complex among them, have in varying degrees a moral and ethical responsiveness. At the lower levels it arises through instinct and at the higher by volition and choice. This acts as a counter weight to the mercenary pulls of a day-to-day life. Steinbeck sees no conflict between the spiritual and material claims. They go hand in hand as in Jim Casy whose metamorphosis is from Evangelism to trade union radicalism. The elites are generally those labouring under some elements of spiritual disquietude. That happens irrespective of economic status. Nor is it religion as it is ordinarily understood.

In Steinbeck's image of man institutionalized religion is allotted a least important place. Rather he denigrates it as part of the Establishment. Love and altruism are the true religion of man . The invidious groupings into churches and sects only make a mockery of its noble ideals. The best among Steinbeck's characters have a yearning towards Eternity. Like Santayana, Steinbeck also appears to believe that man is ever after a quest for a religion that suits his particular needs. In *To a God Unknown* the main characters show divergent religious temperaments based on denominational variations. The Catholic Priest, Father Angelo, and Burton are interesting studies. While the Father is relaxed and

happy, the bigot Burton makes an unpleasant hair shirt. Joseph seeks his own religion a pantheistic heresy which finally helps him to identify the god of his seeking.

It is significant that even the half – caste paisanos have a moral code. While they are flippant about their faith in the Church, they nurture certain ethical scruples. Their attitude to the Pirate's quarters is an instance to the point. Doctor Burton does not accept stereotyped ideas about good and evil but he wants to know the truth and Truth is his God . Casy rejects conventional religion and concocts instead his own gospel of love. Mayor Orden upholds a secular morality which is deeply entrenched in humanism and democracy. Mack and the other bums live beyond the pale of hackneyed morality because they smell its rottenness: still they are not devoid of basic morality in their actions. They exhibit an astonishing negative capability to greed, self aggrandizement and dishonesty which are the unavoidable qualifications for success. Even Dora and her girls show a kind of morality by playing fair in their profession. Further, prompted by genuine humanitarianism, they provide relief and aid to the needy and the indigent.

In his later works, Steinbeck seems to be seriously exercised by the problem of good and evil. He visualizes the human drama as a manifestation of this eternal conflict. Kino and Juana are driven and buffeted by the encrusted evil in society. In The Wayward Bus, Steinbeck presents a medley of characters who impersonate the fact of evil in characteristic ways. Ethan Alley Hawley escapes temptation and moral turpitude with the skin of his teeth. Issues regarding ethics, morality and right action are illustrated with telling effect in East of Eden. Lee

and Samuel take their stand on hard core of ethical values and moral choices which are the cornerstones of purposive existence. These endow man with the greatest gift of all namely the capacity to choose. This places him in the center of the evolutionary process of being and becoming.

Whatever Steinbeck read and whatever he observed in real life became for him a matter to be verified in terms of each other. Literature and theology became valuable to him only when he had put to test all that he had learnt in the living laboratory of contemporary life. His work is not merely the mechanical brain-child of his mind and imagination. He was always passing through the travails of childbirth, and even his novel took life from his personal impression and experience. Whether it be Rigveda or the Bible, he did not follow any doctrine or principle blindly unless it fitted in with the scheme of his personal observation. All was holy to him that he saw embedded in the soil of truthful experience.

Man is the theme of his writings. Man's consciousness, or development is the object of his study with its externalization in the outward social scene. But the external interested him only so far as they led him to the knowledge of the psychological, moral and spiritual reality. He never told a story to beguile his readers. He never wrote anything that was not an experience which he shared with his readers. As a keen observer and a first rate thinker, he was always in search of analogies and similarities of life patterns in human and animal life. Such a study would initiate him into the timeless phenomenon of life on earth. For this, he scanned through the principal theological and religious literature of the east and the west; Jewish, Christian, Hindu and Buddhist. At the same time, he studied the social, economical and political working of different nations in Europe in

general and of America in particular. He observed closely the rural life and its social order. He examined the pattern of class war, the problems of the working class, the labourers, and the migrants. But everywhere he dived deeper and saw the nucleus around which the forces of the individuals and the group work on the individuals and the groups work on the level of human consciousness, so that the contraction and the expansion of consciousness, crawling into the shell of egoism and out of it, falling into a state of spiritual and moral death and being able to resurrect and to redeem itself, became the recurrent theme of his works.

In his wide ranging discovery and exploration of life and its timeless design, Steinbeck was able to see in nature an exact analogy between man and animal and it was the beginning of his biological naturalism. In his peculiarly mystic or compassionate life and animal life are two scales of the same life-pattern. If there is love between human beings or a higher scale, there also exists love and fellow feeling between animals on their own plane. But just as the lower instincts degrade and down-scale the animals, human beings have also a tendency to descend to a lower level of animalism. Selfishness, love of comfort, sense of possession, hatred and animosity are not only the qualities of animals, they are also found in human beings.

To understand Steinbeck's biological naturalism which is found scattered in his novels, it is necessary to turn to his views in Sea of Cortez. Peter Lisca observes about Sea of Cortez that it "makes explicit several working concepts which have been implicit in all Steinbeck's work thus far: non-teleological thinking ecology, the possible individuality of a group animal, survival of the fittest, group-psychomemory, and the mystic unity of all life."²⁷

Steinbeck observes in Sea of Cortez:

We have looked into the tide pools and seen the little animals feeding and reproducing and killing for food. We name them and describe them and, out of long watching, arrive at some conclusion about their habits so that we say, 'this species typically does thus and so, but we do not objectively observe our own species as a species , although we know the individuals fairly well...If we used the same smug observation on ourselves that we do on hermit crabs we would be forced to say , with the information at hand, 'it is one diagnostic trait of Homo sapiens that groups of individuals are periodically infected with a feverish nervousness which causes the individual to turn on and destroy, not only his own kind, but the works of his own kind...When two crayfish meet, they usually fight...And perhaps our species is not likely to forgo war without some psychic mutation which at present, at least, does not seem imminent.'"²⁸

It is in this respect that Steinbeck discovers a very close analogy between men and animals. War, its organization and the instinctive tendency behind it and the violence that follows it, is a natural phenomenon on human and animal planes. In The Moon is Down, Steinbeck not only observes war in an objective way but also records it without registering sympathy for any party. He looks upon it as a natural phenomenon of human life. But at the same time he does not hide his belief that war is the result of animal instincts and animal passions in man, whatever its cause-selfishness, sense of insecurity, sense of possession. In the Sea of Cortez he makes it more explicit. He writes,

...And if one places the blame for killing and destroying an economic insecurity, an inequality, on injustice, he is simply stating the proposition in another way. We have what we are. Perhaps the Crayfish feels the itch of jealousy, or perhaps he is sexually insecure; the effect is that he fights.²⁹

Now when such traits appear in a man or in a group of men, they fight. Here Steinbeck states his naturalistic law to be an integral part of the behavior pattern of both men and animals for they are within the domain of nature and, therefore, governed by this law.

Steinbeck believed that man is very much an animal, but an animal, whose drive is outside himself. He observes :

Man is the only animal whose interest and whose drive are outside himself.

Other animals may dig holes to live in, may weave nests or take possession of hollow trees. Some species, like bees or spiders, even create complicated homes but they do it with the fluids and processes of their own bodies. They make little impression on the world. But the world is furrowed and cut, torn and blasted by man.... He is the only animal who lives outside of himself, whose drive is in external things property, houses, money, concepts of war... But having projected himself into these external complexities, he is them." ³⁰

And it is this conscious process that makes man lose his spiritual strength and moral power. Such tendencies and actions create a veritable wasteland for him to dwell in. This state is certainly deplorable, degrading and diabolic; a veritable inferno. It is a world from where fertility of the land disappears (To a God Unknown) and it becomes a dust-bowl from where people must migrate (The Grapes of Wrath) and a land where pearl buyers chase like hounds and a world where the dreams are stifled (Of Mice and Men) and a world where gold becomes the God and an honest soul is contaminated to be forced to think of suicide (The Winter of Our Discontent) and a world in which a brother kills his own brother and the story of Cain-Abel is re-enacted (East of Eden) and a society in which moral, chaos, sexual perversity, economic exploitation and business ethics create the environments of hell (The Wayward Bus). To be emancipated

from such a degrading predicament, it is necessary to work for one's salvation and the way lies through renunciation, selfishness and love.

Steinbeck has traced parallels in Sea of Cortez while watching the yellow-green fish. He writes:

It is interesting to see how areas are sometimes dominated by one or two species...It is difficult, while watching the little beast, not to trace human parallels... But parallels are amusing if they are not taken too seriously as regards the animal in question, and are down right valuable as regards humans. The routine of changing domination is a case in point. One can think the attached and dominant human who has captured the place, the property and the security. He dominates his area... But in his fight for dominance he has pushed out others of his species who were not so fit to dominate, and these have become wanderers, improperly clothed, ill-fed, having no security and no fixed base. These should really perish but the reverse seems true. The dominant human, in his security, grows soft and fearful...so that one day the dominant man is eliminated and his strong and hungry wanderer takes his place. And the routine is repeated.³¹

The phenomenon is common to both men and animals. So in this respect, in spite of glory and material success, man is hardly following a noble and enduring pattern of values.

Thus, man in his thinking or reverie status admires the progression towards extinction...Man might be described fairly adequately, if simply as a two-legged paradox. He has never become accustomed to the tragic miracle of consciousness.³²

Steinbeck's woman characters constitute a different and controversial subject. They occupy an important place in his novels, yet instead of filling the place of major character, they perform functions of characters important in their relationship to men. Whereas Steinbeck's male characters are engaged in pursuits

of salvation, knowledge and other physical or spiritual goals, most of women characters have only the Hobson's choice-to choose home-keeping failing which there is only whoredom for them. With the exception of Elizabeth in TO a God Unknown, Liza Hamilton in East of Eden, Ma Joad in The Grapes of Wrath and Juana in The Pearl, no other woman character seems to transcend the limitations of sexual relationship. The majority of his women characters remain confined to the ordinary level of living, at most defining or adjusting their relationship with men in various ways.

Steinbeck does not glorify womanhood. In spite of his generous and humanistic outlook, he never romanticizes women. In this respect he is intensely realistic, realistic to the extent of being a naked and stark observer of the traits of women in general, and specially in America. In Cup Of Gold, he states:

All girls and women hoarded something they never spoke of... Another life went on inside of women... ran parallel to their outward lives and yet never crossed them.³³

He finds women to be incapable of developing those traits which make men successful in different spheres of life-business, war, agriculture, strikes, politics and economics. At most they can be found fit to run a brothel or striptease show. The other field in which they make use of their inborn talents is the home. It is at home that they develop maternal love and sense of responsibility. But even at home, if they happen either to have no children at all or to have grown up children, they are prone to exploit sexual relationship. Some of them exploit their sex to the extent of destroying themselves and those connected with them. In this respect Steinbeck conforms to no conventional morality Gladstein observes:

Their (women's) optimistic significance lies, not in their individual, spiritual triumph, but their function as perpetrators and nurturers of the species.³⁴

Since most critical work on Steinbeck has tended to stress his wide variety of techniques and subject matter, the present study becomes particularly important in illustrating how a system of ideas exists beneath the surface diversities. These ideas may be seen to reside in three thematic patterns that recur consistently, though with unequal emphasis throughout Steinbeck's works. The first of these patterns indicates that man is a religious creature and that each man creates a good head to satisfy his personal religious need. The second pattern suggests that mankind may also be viewed biologically as a "group animal" composed of individual ("cells") but having a will and intelligence of its own, distinct from any one of its parts. However, outside the groups is another kind of individual, analogous to the biologist himself, who in the role of Steinbeck's constant hero, observes and comments upon the "animal". The final pattern in the thematic scheme illustrates the "non-teleological" concepts that man lives without knowledge of the cause of his existence; nevertheless, the very mystery of life spurs his search for human values.

Typical of John Steinbeck's fictional characters is their yearning for religious fulfillment. Critics, attempting to define and interpret the characteristic religious tendency, have come to widely differing conclusions. One critic, for example, believes that Steinbeck ultimately reduces man's devoutness to animalism that Steinbeck "presents man as a captive...of instinct and appetites only, blindly desiring and striving, not reasoning, judging, choosing but automatically responding to impulse and attractions"³⁵. Another, however, finds "

a contemporary adaptation of the Christ image" and indications of "some Christian meaning." ³⁶

Still others have seen various of Steinbeck's characters as pagans, pantheists, transcendentalists, and animists. The revealing fact in all this critical diversity is that the particular arguments hold up rather well; a roll-call of Steinbeck's characters would indeed muster an army of separate creeds. I contend that this very variety of religious direction in his characters constitutes one of the important thematic patterns in Steinbeck's novels. That there is an organic relationship between Steinbeck's concept of man and his fiction is obvious from the analysis of his work. From Cup of Gold (1929) through The Winter of Our Discontent (1961) man struggles to attain dignity by imposing order on his dual existence as an individual and as a group animal. In his efforts to become a successful individual and a successful group animal, man often does not succeed. In Steinbeck's first three novels man fails due to his inability to rise above an individuality which prevents him from becoming a group animal; man in these early novels is self-centered. This indulgence of self or self centeredness makes the protagonists either cruel or extremely lonely. Henry Morgan in Cup of Gold is cruel, and Joseph Wayne in To a God Unknown is desperate; the characters in The Pastures of Heaven are lonely.

However, sometimes man fails not so much because of his indulgence of self but because of the cruelty of other men who have become a mob and destroy individuals. Failure of man due to other men is depicted in Steinbeck's such works as Tortilla Flat, In Dubious Battle, and Of Mice and Men. That the protagonists of these novels are not self-centered is obvious from the fact that in

the beginning they have meaningful relationship with other men. Danny in *Tortilla Flat* has his paisano friends who respect each other's individuality. As a group member Danny lives a meaningful life. In *In Dubious Battle*, Jim Nolan feels alive when he works for the party; and in *Of Mice and Men*, Lennie and George together are able to have a dream. But destruction occurs when a group of man, called "group man" by Steinbeck, challenges the right of these protagonists to live their lives. Angered by the challenge, the protagonists of these novels fail to be a part of any group. Danny, due to his anger, separates himself from the paisanos, and Jim Nolan alienates himself from the Party: both are killed. Destruction occurs in *Of Mice and Men* too, when George and Lennie are not together.

But man's struggle to attain dignity is not always abortive. In Steinbeck's novels such as *The Red Pony*, *The Grapes Of Wrath*, *East Of Eden*, *The Winter of Our Discontent*, the nature of man's struggle is even more complex than before, but man is ultimately triumphant. Instrumental in man's triumph is his willingness to accept reality no matter how painful, and his ability to adjust to the world. Jody, for example, had a self sufficient world at the beginning of *The Red Pony*; this world is shattered by disappointment and sorrow, but Jody does not hide behind bitterness or make-believe. Instead, he accepts his role in the kind of world he really is, and becomes responsible. This adjustment in no way diminishes his individuality. In feeling sorry for his grandfather he has created a "bridge of contact" that gives a man "the whole world,"³⁷ according to Steinbeck. Jim Casy and Tom Joad in *The Grapes of Wrath*, Adam and Caleb Trask in *East of Eden*, Ellen and Ethan Hawley in *The Winter of Our Discontent*, Kino and Juana in *The*

Pearl, Doc, Mac and the boys in Cannery Row, all have successfully built bridges of contact with other men, all have achieved individuality or their ideal selves.

But whenever the struggling man fails in Steinbeck's fictional world, the failure is no condemnation of him. If man fails due to his inability to rise above self, Steinbeck does not despise him; and if man fails due to the cruel combative nature of group-man, Steinbeck is not guilty of pity or snobbery. This lack of condemnation or pity creates an awareness of the love and infinite sympathy that Steinbeck has for man. Since man is part animal and part god, he is acceptable in all his diverse states of being. In other words, Steinbeck's concept of man and his love for man are inextricably related, owing to his "love and understanding of instant acceptance," Steinbeck has been able to create a wide and varied fictional world of men and women. Steinbeck's fiction depicts all forms of life until the image of man is unfurled completely with all its flaws and glory.

Through his works Steinbeck envisages an image of man which provides illuminating vistas into the manifold drives and potentialities of human beings. At the lowest level, it is closely allied to the animal world. It is not *infra* dig to acknowledge this relational bond. The egocentric individuals with designs on his fellows are repudiated as abnormal. Man's participation through group existence is recognized as a necessary first step to the development of personality. After rejecting the group animal, he projects the family as the basic dynamic unit. Finally he emphasises the ethical and moral basis of good life and presumes that a moral and spiritual bias is the hallmark of a developing consciousness. As John S. Kennedy has suggested, "Steinbeck's preoccupation with life and living is perhaps the main reason for his popularity and influence."³⁸

He pictures with genuine love the daily life and habits of the American people. A period in American history from the westward migrations for the latter half of the 19th century to the Dust Bowl tragedy of the Twentieth is what he delineates through his major novels. This was the most formative period in the history of the nation. By recreating fictionally that crucial epoch, Steinbeck succeeded in isolating major trends and tendencies. He was seriously disturbed by the injustice and false morality of commercial Civilisation. Some of the problems identified by him are still relevant—that explains his growing popularity with the youth of to-day.

Steinbeck's forte is his well thought out image of man. His cryptic comment about his writing provides the best insight into his work : " A man's writing is himself. A kind man writes kindly – a mean man writes meanly. A sick man writes sickly. And a wise man writes wisely."³⁹ In all his writings, Steinbeck is a kind man. Whether he is wise depends partly on our idea of wisdom. But he is never mean nor does his soul appear ever to have been sick. Among the masters of world fiction, his place is as one who loved only too well and provided an image of man abounding in vitality, depth, comprehensiveness and exaltation.

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CHAPTER 3

**NON- TELEOLOGICAL
OR
"IS" THINKING**

John Steinbeck, a product of his time and milieu, reflects as clearly as modern American writer the positive and negative aspects of the American travel experience. In three books of travel, The Log From The Sea of Cortez (1951), A Russian Journal (1948) and Travels With Charley (1962) and in a series of essays as Once There Was a War (1958), he alternatingly displays the spirit of open curiosity which enlarges experience as well as the closed belief that ours is the only way to live. Additionally, the body of his travel literature tells us about the author's own search for meaning. It also assists us in our search for order by illuminating the highly paradoxical nature of the American character.

From the time when his consciousness was sharpened by first hand observation of the political crisis in California's agricultural valleys, Steinbeck developed in his writings a series of remedies for the social evils he saw. These remedies reflect his belief in man's ability to pursue meaningful social goals. The thematic substructures of his greatest social novels, In Dubious Battle and The Grapes of Wrath are laced through with the novelist's teleological belief in the value of human progress. Steinbeck celebrates man's ability to emerge ahead of his accomplishments and grow beyond his concepts, when those concepts are framed by a recognition of the unity of all life in a regulated, ordered cosmos. The battle in In Dubious Battle is dubious in that Steinbeck shows how neither blind partisan action nor detached observation can solve the pressing problem faced by the dispossessed and the downtrodden. And The Grapes of Wrath ends in triumph as Steinbeck creates in the character of Jim Casy a man of messianic vision who converts an understanding of the unity of life into a gospel of social action.

It seems quite strange that Steinbeck's The Grapes of Wrath (1939) was followed by The Log from the Sea of Cortez (1941) which is the narrative record of the Steinbeck-Ricketts marine collecting expedition to the Gulf of California in the Spring of 1940. In this unusual work of travel literature, Steinbeck ostensibly abandons his commitment to concepts of social progress and expresses a sort of perfect scientific vacuum. He seems to question that factor of civilization which we call progress. He celebrates the unadorned life styles of simple Indians of the Gulf who may someday remain "to sun themselves", to eat and starve and sleep and reproduce while "a great and good-like race" of North Americans "fly away in four motored bombers to the accompaniment of exploding bombs, the Voice of God calling them home."¹

When, however, all the facts about the composition of The Log are revealed, it becomes clear that the gospel of anti-progress stated in that volume is not Steinbeck's. Rather it belongs to the book's co-author marine biologist Edward F. Ricketts whose belief in the value of what he calls "non-teleological thinking" (which calls for understanding -acceptance rather than propaganda for change and which is defined in an essay of the same name in the narrative) informs the philosophical structure of the entire Log.

Beyond an attachment to nature, a scientific outlook, an inductive approach to experience, and an organicistic conception of nature as a whole, there is one other aspect of Steinbeck's thought prior to meeting Ricketts that should be examined in some detail is his adherence to non-teleological thinking. "Teleology" is one of those words whose meaning easily slips away and whose applications always seem a bit fuzzy. It comes from the Greek telos, meaning

"end" or "purpose". We often use the word to refer to design or purpose in nature and the existence of "God's plane". In the words of Webster's Third New International, we use the term to describe.

"the fact of the character of being directed toward an end or shaped by a purpose-used of natural processes or of nature as a whole conceived as determined by final causes or by the design of a divine Providence."²

Teleological thinking is goal-oriented. It is often linked with the idea of progress. It is usually associated with religious interpretations of the universe, and frequently tied to the idea of free will. Non-teleological thinking, in the traditional sense, is thinking that is mechanistic. One event leads to another, and what happens is directed by physical laws. There is no possibility of freewill. All events are determined- and there is no way of knowing whether or not there is divine Providence, an overall design.

A great part of the difficulty with the terms comes out of circumstances that our culture, including our literature, operates on the basis of causal and purposive assumptions, and our very language has teleological implications. If one applies the term "teleological" very strictly, it is very hard to escape from it-in other words, to speak totally non-teleologically. Further complicating the problem is that Ricketts- the term "non-teleological" is his, not Steinbeck's-like so many self-educated men, attached his own meaning to words, and his use of "non-teleological" is partially his own. But it is major word in his vocabulary. It involves a concept much under discussion by the two men, and has become a key term in Steinbeck criticism in recent years. It also makes the place where Richard

Astro, the most informed writer on Steinbeck's philosophy, sees the most significant conflict of ideas between Steinbeck and Ricketts.

It would appear that from very early, from his high school days or before, Steinbeck was, in the traditional sense, a non-teleological thinker. The precise source of these ideas in his life is impossible to trace. We can guess that it was probably a mixture of influences and events: a rejection of Christianity, because it represented for him middle-class respectability and because it seemed irrelevant and untrue; his early fondness for such writers as Mark Twain and Jack London; conversations during his college years with men in the field who advocated a socialist-atheist point of view; and exposure to the materialistic philosophy of Harold Chapman Brown.

Whatever the actual combination, Steinbeck presented almost from the beginning of his published work a world that was mechanistic and independent of the desire of man and the presence of God. There may be enough immediate physical cause to provide some logic, but by and large, there is the pervasive sense that things just happen. People who act by their dreams are defeated; people who try to change things are usually unsuccessful. The best that man can hope for is to be able to adapt to what is and to survive. There is even a natural selection in his work. The weak, the deformed, the deficient-Joy in In Dubious Battle, the red pony, Lennie in Of Mice and Men, the grandparents, the Wilsons, and Noah In the Grapes of Wrath- do not survive. The healthy, amoral poor who deal with life on biological basis are usually the people who can, like the paisanos and Mack and the boys, adapt the best. The middle class has been duped by a teleological value

system that tends to make it easy prey either in the natural jungle or in the social jungle. To quote from Harnold Chapman Brown:

In religion we hold to our dogma, extol the humble and praise the unworldly, yet, in practice, the humble are trampled upon, and the unworldly are neglected or merely the objects of a somewhat cynical wit.³

Perhaps in William Emerson Ritter's organicistic whole there is, technically, a sense of internal teleology. But if "the whole depend [s] on the orderly co-operation and inter-dependence of its parts",⁴ the only teleology for Steinbeck in this is the cause and effect of the gears in a machine. We don't know why one gear bears against another, or why this lever goes this way and another goes that way- it just does. Nor do we know if the whole machine has some purpose or overall design, nor can we suppose that there is some Great Mechanic in the sky. Man can never really change the operation of the machine in any significant way; all he can do is to try to understand what aspects of the machine may be available to him to examine. For Steinbeck, looking and understanding are always the keys, and thus each man must be a scientist. In Ritter's words,

The comprehensive study of nature when man is fully included in nature must be pursued with a mental technique adequate to conceive individual objects (of which the conceiving human being itself is one) and all objects to be so related to one another as to constitute the general order of nature, the universe...The results (of Ritter's study of various biological processes) imply that all men should be naturalists, in the sense that they should be sympathetic in their feeling for nature, painstaking in acquiring knowledge of nature, eager in identifying their wholeselves with nature, and critical in examining their own mental and physical processes in order to validate both their feelings and knowledge.⁵

Of Course, Steinbeck was not alone among American authors in presenting man as a small speck in an indifferent universe (Crane & Twain), or as victimised

within a society characterized by social Darwinism (Sinclair and Norris), or as subject to the harsh laws of nature (London), or as controlled by the physical chemical scheme of a mechanistic universe (Dreiser). But his affection for the alternative to an anthropocentric view of life is unique. He was the only major writer within the American tradition of naturalism who reacted to science in a positive way, embraced a scientific perception of the universe with enthusiasm, and really knew something about science.

Because of his attachment to science, Steinbeck's approach tends to be more neutral, less dominated by irony and disillusionment. In realism-naturalism, one sees clearly and therefore is led to reject traditional or personal projections onto reality. One would like to believe in romance, in poetic justice, in a grand design and in a personal God, but in light of the evidence, one cannot. The resulting disillusionment, as in the case of the correspondent in Stephen Crane's "The Open Boat", often leads the individual to the anger of someone who has been swindled. By contrast, if the individual fully assumes a non-teleological point of view, he rejects traditional and personal projections so that he *can* see the truth. The fiction of such writers as Crane, Norris, and Dreiser often suggests that the dream is better than the reality, but that the dream is impossible to hold on to. Steinbeck's more thoroughly non-teleological perception leads to a fiction in which things simply are "as they are". The real bitterness lies in man's attempts to divorce himself from nature and in his attempts to conceal or avoid reality.

In Steinbeck's work the revelation that the values of a man-centered universe are false-what he came to call the "non-teleological break-through"-is not an occasion for melancholy so much as for celebration in response to a fuller

understanding. I suspect that Steinbeck's own lack of ego made it easier for him to accept the relative unimportance of man and turn instead to a calm and even joyful realization of man's interdependence with the whole of nature. Compare this response to that of Dreiser, a naturalistic author with a very large ego, who was almost destroyed by his reading of Thomas Huxley and Herbert Spencer.

Steinbeck's non-teleological approach is most apparent in his fiction of the mid-thirties and beyond, beginning with In Dubious Battle. In this novel Ricketts's influence would seem to have overt expression in a character, Doc Burton, who is modeled after Ricketts and who in speech and behavior reflects Ricketts's philosophy. Through Burton the author clearly sets up a non-teleological frame through which the action of the novel is to be viewed. This figure, although compassionate, remains detached. He declares that his main concern is to see, to try to get the whole picture, and this, in turn, is the concern of the book itself, to present the whole picture of man with narrow vision in conflict with each other and to do so without attaching praise or blame. The question is, is Steinbeck reflecting Ricketts's ideas here, or is he using a Ricketts-like figure to enunciate his own perspective because he found that the biologist in life was a demonstration of those ideas?

I think the latter is probably more true-In Dubious Battle does not mark a new direction in Steinbeck's thought. In his early fiction we also find a non-teleological point of view, but expressed more indirectly.

The world of the The Pastures of Heaven and To a God Unknown is a mechanistic one in which there is no ultimate cause or design. While Joseph Wayne's life in To a God Unknown demonstrates the futility of man's vanity and

the emptiness of his search for ultimate purpose in nature, there is nevertheless, much about Joseph's character which expresses a non-teleological philosophy. To Lester Jay Marks, Joseph is in several ways a predecessor of this scientist figure or "Doc" character.

Although Joseph personally rejects the rigmarole of formal religion, he remains concerned that each man follows his own belief. His only stipulation is that, he will not interfere in the religious practices of others and they do not interfere with his. Not only is he tolerant and accepting in this regard, but he refuses to condemn or be punitive in response to the killing of his brother Benjy, or to the girdling of his tree by his brother Burton. For Joseph, as for Casy in The Grapes of Wrath, "There ain't no sin and there ain't no virtue. There's just stuff people do."⁶ Furthermore, as Marks points out, there is in Joseph "the same kind of wide vision that is typical of Steinbeck's later [non-teleological] heroes."⁷ When he observes the ritual performed by the old hermit on the ocean cliff, he is not repulsed, he does not condemn-he is interested. He observes, "This man has discovered a secret."⁸

Connected to his breadth of vision is his isolation from humanity. In Steinbeck's work the non-teleological hero-Doc Burton, Casy, and Doc in Cannery Row- is always something of an outsider, and by being so, he can observe more clearly the entire pattern outside the small preoccupations of individuals. Joseph is never part of the group; he is always somewhat distant, preoccupied with larger concerns than the people about him. After his wife

Elizabeth dies, Rama tells him,

You didn't know her as a person. You never have known a person. You aren't aware of persons, Joseph; only people. You can't see units, Joseph, only the whole.⁹

This was the author's primary concern and a major theme through out his fiction-he wanted the reader to discard the blinders of teleology and to see the whole as it really is. Even in short stories, such as "The Chrysanthemums" or "Flight," he is not just telling us about the frustrations of a rancher's wife or the tragic initiation into manhood of a Mexican-American boy, he is also-and for him, more importantly-defining the nature of reality.

The character of Joseph Wayne, so long in the making prior to Steinbeck's relationship with Ricketts, suggests that the role of the non-teleological observer was in progress and created without the input of Ricketts's philosophy. Indeed, what apparently attracted Steinbeck to Ricketts was that the biologist fitted the role he had already created, and as the friendship progressed, Ricketts became more and more the living model for the role, which in turn was altered to fit the man, so that by Cannery Row, the role and the man had become nearly identical. Or at least identical in Steinbeck's mind -there is the further possibility that he did not always see his friend very clearly, but in "using" him, idealized him by exaggerating in his mind those qualities he valued most.

The two men did not always agree, of course, but even in seeming to agree, they sometimes were talking about different things. One of the most acute perceptions of the relationship between the philosophies of the author biologist has been offered by Richard Albee, George Albee's younger brother, who came to live in Monterey in the mid-thirties. Having been recently involved in the study of philosophy at U.C.L.A., he became a participant in the serious discussions of

ideas that usually involved only Steinbeck and Ricketts. He remembers sitting in the lab many times and listening to the two men discuss a subject in very similar terms. Yet, as Albee observed, although they might be talking about the same thing and using similar language, and might even feel that they were agreeing with each other, they were in actuality, Albee feels, talking in parallel, each within his own frame of reference.

The truth of the matter seems to be that both men came into the relationship with well-established philosophies, and neither dominated the other intellectually. One could just as well ask, "How did Steinbeck influence Ricketts?"¹⁰ as ask the question the other way around. They used each other, as friends should, and one would be hard pressed to say who got the better of the bargain. I don't think that any of the major ideas that find expression in Steinbeck's fiction originated with Ricketts, but most were developed and nurtured in the rich soil of their mutual enthusiasm for exploring ideas and their implications. They were like two trees of the same species but different varieties, which grew together, side by side.

Their ideas and interests often overlapped, but their needs were different. Steinbeck found a deep participation by writing; Ricketts looked toward some mystical breakthrough to a sense of totally integrated reality. In his essay on Ricketts, Steinbeck described his friend's malaise and his search, which often seemed to be tied up with his relationships with women.

There was a transcendent sadness in his love-something he missed or wanted, a searching that sometimes approached panic. I don't know what it was he wanted that was never there, but I know he always looked for it and never

found it... I think he found some of it in music. It was like a deep and endless nostalgia—a thirst and passion for "going home."¹¹

He was walled off a little, so that he worked at his philosophy of "breaking through" of coming out through the back of the mirror into some kind of reality which would make the day world dreamlike. This thought obsessed him. He found the symbols of "breaking through" in Faust, in Gregorian music, and in the sad, drunken poetry of Li Po.

Part of Ricketts's mysticism, in apparent conflict with his Faust-like search, was an Oriental acceptance of the many manifestations of reality, whether beautiful or ugly, just or unjust. For Ricketts, acceptance (to quote from one of his unpublished essays) meant "not dirt for dirt's sake, or grief merely for the sake of grief, but dirt and grief wholly accepted if necessary as struggle vehicles of an emergent joy-achieving things which are not transient by means of things which are."¹² Such acceptance, which seems passive, was not in his mind in conflict with the struggle toward enlightenment. On the contrary, the two must operate together: "Intense struggle is one of the commonest concomitants to a great emergent ... [But] where there is refusal to accept the hazards of grief and tragedy, as occurs more frequently than not, I should expect to see the struggle belittle rather than deify, since whatever *is* has to be taken and accepted in order for development to proceed."¹³

In speaking of one such breakthrough, Ricketts describes a miner's wife at the scene of a mine disaster, talking on a company phone to her husband, who was one of the survivors down below. She talked to him all during the night as workers dug through the cave-in to reach those trapped on the other side. At last the rescue was made, and when her shocked and emaciated husband was hauled

out of the shaft, dirty, unkempt and unshaven, she broke through into illumination. For years she had been repelled by his untidiness. She had blunted herself and him by nagging reform. Now suddenly all that seemed not very important. The fault was still there. If she paused to look she could realise it now more clearly than ever before. She was actually less blind than at any time in her life, only now she saw things in their relation to a far larger picture, a more deeply significant whole. She genuinely liked him she realised now, neither in spite of nor because of it; sufficient simply to face the fact that that trait was him whom she loved. She had accepted fully and without evasion the burden of anxiety, and something new was born again out of the ashes of struggle.

In such passages as this, the religious quality of Ricketts's thought becomes clear. To acceptance and the struggle toward spiritual enlightenment add his philosophy of nonacquisition of material goods and a belief that the pain and turmoil of daily life are only apparent, hiding from us the true harmony of reality, and you have assembled the elements of doctrine shared by several Eastern religions. Ricketts did not convert his friend to a religious point of view—Steinbeck remained an agnostic and, essentially, a materialist—but Ricketts's religious acceptance did tend to work on his friend, moderating as I have mentioned, his rage and persuading him in his daily life to take a larger prospective.

By his own impetus, Steinbeck did express a degree of acceptance, but it was of a variety different from Ed's. For him, people were the products of their environments, and he was curious about the equations expressed in individual lives. The inductive search became a habit of life, and he cultivated the ability to

get along, even blend in, with a wide range of people. However, he could not forgive certain kinds of behavior, and he could not reach that "tower beyond tragedy" (to use a phrase that Ed adopted from Yeats) that would allow him to ignore injustice as ultimately unimportant.

Just as his personal acceptance was motivated in part by a scientific habit of mind, so the acceptance expressed in his writing was motivated by an effort toward scientific impartiality. In his writings, there are no heroes or villains (even Cathy in *East of Eden* is simply a product of nature, part of the statistical extreme; indeed, it is out of statistical necessity for such sports that myth is often generated-as in response to "gints"), not even the romanticized we call anti-heroes, just people caught in the web of nature. A striking early example of Steinbeck's brand of acceptance appears in the first pages of *To a God Unknown*. Joseph Wayne encounters a wild boar eating a little pig . At first Wayne is angered by the sight: " 'Damn you', he cried. 'Eat other creatures. Don't eat your own people'".¹⁴ He pulls his rifle from its scabbard hanging from his saddle and almost shoots the boar. But with a sudden realization of the absurdity of his reaction , he laughs and tells himself , "I'm taking too great power into my hands...Why he's the father of fifty pigs and he may be the source of fifty more."¹⁵ His realization is that man must accept events in nature that contradict his values, since the pattern of nature is not only beyond his comprehension, but it is also beyond his power to alter significantly.

This passage is also a good example of Steinbeck's "traditional" type of non-teleological thinking. By contrast, Ed's version, inspired by his struggle to

"break through", assigned all temporal and material phenomena as perceived by man to the apparent, to the outward, teleological mask over the eternal and real. What was non-teleological was the permanent harmony beyond appearance. Thus Ricketts almost reverses the traditional meaning of the term.

In his discussion of the relationships between the philosophies of Ricketts and Steinbeck, Richard Astro, using Ricketts's definition of non-teleological thinking, finds that of the two men, only Ricketts's thought was truly non-teleological. While this assessment may be accurate according to Ricketts's use of the term, it is also confusing and misleading. In order to appreciate Steinbeck's unique achievement in fiction, it is necessary to understand just how extremely naturalistic and non-teleological it actually was. Astro goes on to argue that "throughout his career, Steinbeck celebrated man's singular ability to pursue significant goals and achieve meaningful progress...[He] consistently put the highest premium upon action, conflict, and change."¹⁶ Again, if we judge Steinbeck within the context of Ricketts's idea only, we shall hardly get a satisfactory answer. The fabric of Steinbeck's fiction as a whole tells a somewhat different story.

Seldom in his work does action ever achieve anything or is progress actually made. In many of Steinbeck's novels a philosophical character with whom the author's essential sympathy lies is paired with a man of action. The philosophical character seldom acts, while the man of action does not usually act very effectively or very well. Steinbeck's point seems to be that you don't act to gain results-a teleological formulation-you look in order to understand.

Steinbeck's interest in non-teleology as a way of approaching life and literature was first stimulated by his association with Ed. Ricketts at the Pacific Biological laboratories, and like the group-man theory, it rapidly moves in the fiction far beyond its scientific sources. Ricketts believed that people in a complex universe tended to search for its purpose before they had any comprehension of what it was—they asked the question "Why?" before they tried to answer the question "how?" Ricketts advocated instead what he called "is" thinking that sought understanding without judgment, and it was therefore "capable of great tenderness, of an all-embracingness which is rare otherwise."¹⁷

Steinbeck's amateur biology has thrown up certain ideas which provide a key to understanding his art, one such is "is" thinking, which in other words, is artistic objectivity and ethical disinterestedness. Steinbeck is wary of preconceptions and traditional nations. He dispenses with the general tendency for baseless assumptions and presuppositions. Though not profound as philosophy, it is meaningful in unlocking his esthetics. Steinbeck explains it thus:

...through inspection of thinking technique a kind of purity of approach might be consciously achieved—that non-teleology or "is" thinking might be substituted in part for the usual cause-effect methods.¹⁸

This idea of "is" thinking is important in Steinbeck's image of man. All his ideologues, the leaders and the heroes, are endowed, in different degrees, with this goodlike detachment. His 'hero' who is a dressed-up version of his own personality, invariably enjoys this "negative capability". In *East of Eden*, Lee compliments Samuel Hamilton thus: "you are one of the rare people who can separate your observation from your preconception."¹⁹ Ed. Ricketts, the original of Doc, has this steady, lonely eye; he contemplates in Olympian isolation,

Steinbeck, the artist, in his fiction oscillates between understanding detachment and all too human involvement, thereby informing his novels with the necessary complexity and ambivalence characteristic of life.

"Is" thinking, equated by Steinbeck with non-teleological method, is "capable of great tenderness, of an all embracingness which is rare otherwise."²⁰ Its advantage is that it helps displaying genuine sympathy without becoming sentimental. The fact, that all his novels exude this kind of disinterested love and compassion, vouchsafes the superiority of this method. His fictional world is peopled with all kind of human beings, ranging from one end of the spectrum to the other. Among them the dispossessed and exploited receive more of his consideration. The patronage which he extends to the underdog, the bums, the idlers, the restarted, pimps whores and misfits of all sorts, helps him to forge an image of man which is characterized by unity in diversity.

Steinbeck acquired much of his ideas concerning non-teleological thinking from Ed. Ricketts. He met Ricketts in 1930, while the extensive task of writing and revising To A God Unknown was in progress, and in 1940 the two men journeyed together on a zoological collecting trip to the Sea of Cortez. The results of this trip were published in 1941 as a collaboration by the two entitled Sea of Cortez: A Leisurely Journal of Travel and Research. A great idea of philosophy found in the narrative portion of this book undoubtedly originated in the thoughts and notebooks of Ed. Ricketts. There can be no doubt that Steinbeck was strongly influenced by Ricketts's thinking, however, and that as far as To A God Unknown is concerned, Steinbeck identified with and assimilated much of Ricketts's non-teleological philosophy. Richard Astro suggests that

... in To a God Unknown ... the impact of the marine biologist's ideas on the novelist's fiction becomes apparent for the first time. And a careful examination of the facts concerning the composition of To a God Unknown suggests that by 1932 Steinbeck was already vitally interested in Ricketts's world-view-so much so, in fact, that he altered the entire thematic structure in revised version of this philosophical crucial novel in accordance with the kind of thinking he and Ricketts were doing.²¹

Perhaps the greatest insight into what Steinbeck is attempting in To a God Unknown is contained in the definition of religion offered in The Log:

And it is strange thing that most of the feelings we call religious, most of the mystical out crying which is one of the most prized and used and desired reactions of our species, is really the understanding and the attempt to say that man is related to the whole thing, known and unknowable.²²

To a God Unknown is designed to demonstrate this belief, to show that underlying all religious symbols and all forms of religion is this one element: the attempt to say that man is a part of the "whole". The common element in all of the religious symbols and references that run through the book is sacrifice, finally self sacrifice , for in sacrifice found the ultimate statement of commitment to the earth and to man "all reality , known and unknowable."

In Sea a Cortez Steinbeck details and defends his non-teleological methods. In the first place, he views theological thinking as misleading and impractical:

What we personally conceive by the term "teleological thinking "... is most frequently associated with the evaluating of causes and effects , the purposiveness of events. This kind of thinking considers changes and cures – what "should be" in the terms of an end pattern (which is often a subjective or anthropomorphic projection); it presumes the bettering of conditions, often,

unfortunately, without achieving more than a most superficial understanding of those conditions. In their sometimes intolerant refusal to face facts as they are, teleological notions may substitute a fierce but ineffectual attempt to change conditions which are assumed to be undesirable, in place of the understanding – acceptance which would pave the way for a more sensible attempt at any change which might still be indicated.²³

In this last sentence we can begin to see how Steinbeck does not preclude a kind of "change" taking place within the order of things "as they are", Infact, only by accepting things as they are can we understand them well enough to take sensible action. The limited nature of such change is implied in Steinbeck's following explanation of non-teleological thinking and in his allusion to Darwin:

Non -teleological ideas derive through "is" thinking, associated with natural selection as Darwin seems to have understood it. They imply depth, fundamentalism and clarity – seeing beyond traditional or personal projections. They consider events as outgrowth and expressions rather than as results; conscious acceptance as a desideratum, and certainly as an all – important prerequisite. Non -teleological thinking concerns itself primarily not with what should be, or could be, or might be, but rather with what actually "is" – attempting at most to answer the already sufficiently difficult questions what or how, instead of why.²⁴

So while teleological thinking may help us to see "rational aspects" of a whole picture, we should not do deceived into believing that it leads us to first cause. Events occur and changes take place (as in natural selection), but only dangerously wishful thinking lets us believe that we have the final answer to the question why. "The rational picture," Steinbeck continues, "should be regarded only as a glimpse-a challenge to consider also the rest of the relations as they are

available-to envision the whole picture as well as can be done with given abilities and data.”²⁵

Steinbeck anticipates the horrified reactions to such non-causal thinking. He considers the fear of many people that the non teleological approach would leave them “dangling out in space, deprived of such emotional support as had been offered to them by an unthinking belief ...in the institution of traditions; religion; science; in the security of the home or the family; or in a comfortable bank account.”²⁶ But he holds that this kind of thinking actually emancipates man from the trap he imposes upon himself by his “partial and biased mental reconstructing”. Causal thinking leads man through a maze where at any bank wall he may stop and accept the illusion that he has finally reached the end. Non-teleological thinking recognizes the illusion for what it is and seeks to understand the whole complex situation, thereby making way for intelligent action. This is kinder, Steinbeck believes, than the false security afforded by the illusion, rather than cruelly depriving man of his foundation for living,

non-teleological methods more than any other seem capable of great tenderness, of an all embracingness which is rarely otherwise. Consider for instance, the fact that, once a given situation is deeply understood, no apologies are required. There are ample difficulties even to understanding conditions “as is”. Once that has been accomplished, the “why” of it (known now to be simply a relation, though probably a near and important one) seems no longer to be preponderantly important. It needn’t be condoned or extenuated, it just “is”. It is seen merely as part of more or less dim whole picture ...with the non-teleological treatment there is only the love and understanding of instant acceptance; after that fundamental has been achieved, the next step, if any should be necessary, can be considered more sensibly.²⁷

Teleological-thinking may even be highly fallacious, especially where it approaches the very superficial but quite common post hoc, ergo propter hoc pattern. Consider the situation with reference to dynamiting in a quarry. Before a charge is set off, the foreman toots warningly on a characteristic whistle. People living in the neighborhood come to associate the one with the other, since the whistle is almost invariably followed within a few seconds by the shock and sound of an explosion for which one automatically prepares oneself. Having experienced this many times without closer contact, a very native and unthinking person might justly conclude not only that there was a cause effect relation but that the whistle actually caused the explosion. A slightly wiser person would insist that the explosion caused the whistle, but would be hard put to explain the transport time element. The normal adult would recognize that the whistle no more caused the explosion than the explosion caused the whistle, but that both were parts of a larger pattern out of which a "why" could be postulated for both, but more immediately and particularly for the whistle. Determined to chase the thing down in a cause-effect sense, an observer would have to be very wise indeed who could follow the intricacies of cause through more fundamental cause to primary cause, even in this largely man-made series about which we presumably know most of the motives, causes, and ramifications. He would eventually find himself in a welter of thoughts on production and ownership of the means of production, and economic whys and wherefores about which there is little agreement.

The example quoted is obvious and simple. Most things are far more subtle than that, and have many of their relations and most of their origins far back in

things more difficult of access than the tooting of a whistle calculated to warn bystanders away from an explosion. We know little enough even of a man-made series like this- how much less of purely natural phenomena about which also there is apt to be teleological pontificating!

Usually it seems to be true that when even the most definitely apparent cause-effect situations are examined in the light of wider knowledge, the cause-effect aspect comes to be seen as less rather than more significant, and the statistical or relational aspects acquire larger importance. It seems safe to assume that non-teleological is more "ultimate" than teleological reasoning. Hence the latter would be expected to prove to be limited and constricting expect when used provisionally. But while it is true that the former is more open, for that very reason its employment necessitates greater discipline and care in order to allow for the dangers of looseness and inadequate control.

Frequently, however, a truly definitive answer seems to arise through teleological methods. Part of this is due to wish-fulfillment delusion. When a person asks "Why?" in a given situation, he usually deeply expects, and in any case receives, only a relational answer in place of the definitive "because" which he thinks he wants. But he customarily accepts the actually relational answer (it couldn't be anything else unless it comprised the whole, which is unknowable except by "living into") as a definitive "because." Wishful thinking probably fosters that error, since everyone continually searches for absolutisms (hence the value placed on diamonds, the most permanent physical things in the world) and imagines continually that he finds them. More justly, the relational picture should be regarded only as a glimpse- a challenge to consider also the rest of the relation

as they are available-to envision the whole picture as well as can be done with given abilities and data. But one accepts it instead of a real "because," considers it settled, and having named it, loses interest and goes on to something else.

Chiefly, however, we seem to arrive occasionally at definitive answers through the working of another primitive principle: the universality of quanta. No one thing ever merges gradually into anything else; the steps are discontinuous, but often so very minute as to seem truly continuous. If the investigation is carried deep enough, the factor in question, instead of being graphable as a continuous process, will be seen to function by discrete quanta with gaps or synapses between, as do quanta of energy, undulations of light. The apparently definitive answer occurs when causes and effects both arise on the same large plateau which is bounded a great way off by the steep rise which announces the next plateau. If the investigation is extended sufficiently, that distant rise will, however, inevitably be encountered.

The answer which formerly seemed definitive now will be seen to be at least slightly inadequate and the picture will have to be enlarged so as to include the plateau next further out. Everything impinges on everything else, often into radically different systems, although in such cases faintly. We doubt very much if there are any truly "closed systems". Those so called represent kingdoms of a great continuity bounded by the sudden discontinuity of great synapses which eventually must be bridged in any unified-field hypothesis. For instance, the ocean, with reference to waves of water, might be considered as a closed system. But anyone who has lived in Pacific Grove or Carmel during the winter storm will

have felt the house tremble at the impact of waves half a mile or more away impinging on a totally different "closed" system.

But the greatest fallacy in, or rather the greatest objection to, teleological thinking is in connection with the emotional content, the belief. People get to believing and even to professing the apparent answer thus arrived at, suffering mental constrictions by emotionally closing their minds to any of the further and possibly opposite "answers" which might otherwise be unearthed by honest effort — answers which, if faced realistically, would give rise to a struggle and to a possible rebirth which might place the whole problem in a new and more significant light. Grant for a moment that among students of endocrinology a school of thought might arise, centering upon some belief as to etiology-upon the belief, for instance, that all abnormal growth is caused by glandular imbalance. Such a clique, becoming formalized and powerful, would tend, by scorn and opposition, to wither any contrary view which, if untrammeled, might discover a clue to some opposing "causative" factor of equal medical importance. That situation is most unlikely to arise in a field so lusty as endocrinology, with its relational insistence, but the principle illustrated by a poor example is thought nevertheless to be sound.

Significant in this connection is the fact that conflicts may arise between any two or more of the "answers" brought forth by either of the teleologies, or between the two teleologies themselves. But there can be no conflict between any of these and the non-teleological picture. For instance, in the condition called hyperthyroidism, the treatments advised by believers in the psychic or neurosis etiology very possibly may conflict with those arising out of a belief in the purely

physical causes. Or even within the physical teleology group there may be conflict between those who believe the condition due to a strictly thyroid upset and those who consider causation derived through a general imbalance of the ductless glands. But there can be no conflict between any or all of these factors and the non-teleological pictures, because the latter includes them-evaluates them rationally or at least attempts to do so., or may be only accepts them as time-place truths. Teleological "answers" necessarily must be included in the non-teleological method- Since they are part of the picture even if only restrictedly true-and as soon as their qualities of relatedness are recognized, even erroneous beliefs are real things, and have to be considered proportional to their spread or intensity. "All-truth" must embrace all extant apropos errors also, and know them as such by relation to the whole, and allow for their effects.

The criterion of validity in the handling of data seems to be this: that the summary shall say in substance, significantly and understandingly, "It's so because it is so."²⁸ Unfortunately the very same words might equally derive through a most superficial glance, as any child could learn to repeat from memory the most abstruse of Dirac's equations. But to know a thing emergently and significantly is something else again, even though the understanding may be expressed in the self-same words that were used superficially. In the following example²⁹ note the deep significance of the emergent as contrasted with the presumably satisfactory but actually incorrect original naive understanding. At one time an important game bird in Norway, the willow grouse, was so clearly threatened with extinction that it was thought wise to establish protective regulations and to place a bounty on its chief enemy, a hawk which was known to

feed heavily on it. Quantities of the hawks were exterminated, but despite such drastic measures the grouse disappeared actually more rapidly than before. The naively applied customary remedies had obviously failed. But instead of becoming discouraged and quietistically letting this bird go the way of the great hawk and the passenger pigeon, the authorities enlarged the scope of their investigations until the anomaly was explained. An ecological analysis into the relational aspects of the situation disclosed that a parasitic disease, coccidiosis, was epizootic among the grouse. In its incipient stages, this disease so reduced the flying speed of the grouse that the mildly ill individuals became easy prey for the hawks. In living largely off the slightly ill birds, the hawks prevented them from developing the disease in its full intensity and so spreading it more widely and quickly to otherwise healthy fowl. Thus the presumed enemies of the grouse, by controlling the epizootic aspects of the disease, proved to be friends in disguise.

In summarizing the above situation, the measure of validity wouldn't be to assume that, even in the well-understood factor of coccidiosis, we have the real "cause" of any beneficial or untoward condition, but to say, rather, that in this phase we have a highly significant and possibly preponderantly important relational aspect of picture.

However, many people are unwilling to chance the sometimes ruthless-appearing notions which may arise through non-teleological treatments. They fear even to use them in that they may be left dangling out in space, deprived of such emotional support as had been afforded them by an unthinking belief in the proved value of pest control in the conservation of game birds; in the institution of tradition; religion; science; in the security of the home or the family; or in a

comfortable bank account. But for that matter emancipations in general are likely to be held in terror by those who may not yet have achieved them, but whose thresholds in those respects are becoming significantly low. Think of the fascinated horror, or at best tolerance, with which little girls regard their brothers who have dispensed with the Santa Claus belief; or the fear of the devout young churchman for his university senior who has grown away from depending on the security of religion.

As a matter of fact, whoever employs this type of thinking with other than a few close friends will be referred to as detached, hard-hearted, or even cruel. Quite the opposite seems to be true. Non-teleological methods more than any other seems capable of great tenderness, of an all-embracingness which is rare otherwise. Consider, for instance, the fact that, once a given situation is deeply understood, no apologies are required. There are difficulties even to understanding conditions "as is." Once that has been accomplished, the "why" of it (known now to be simply a relation, though probably a near and important one) seems no longer to be preponderantly important. It needn't be condoned or extenuated, it just "is." It is seen merely as part of a more less dim whole picture. As an example: A woman near us in the Carmel woods was upset when her dog was poisoned- frightened at the thought of passing the night alone after years of companionship with the animal. She phoned to ask if, with our windows on that side of the house closed as they were normally, we could hear her ringing a dinner bell as a signal during the night that marauders had cut her phone wires preparatory to robbing her. Of course that was, in fact, an improbably contingency to be provided against; a man would call it a foolish fear, neurotic. And so it was.

But one could say kindly, "We can hear the bell quite plainly, but if desirable we can adjust our sleeping arrangements so as to be able to come over there instantly in case you need us,"³⁰ without even stopping to consider whether or not the fear was foolish, or to be concerned about it if it were correctly regarding all that as secondary. And if the woman had said apologetically, "Oh, you must forgive me, I know my fears are foolish, but I am so upset"³¹ the wise reply would have been, "Dear person, nothing to forgive. If you have fears, they are, they are, real things, and to be considered. Whether or not they're foolish is beside the point. What they are unimportant alongside the fact that they are."³² In other words, the badness or goodness, the teleology of the fears, was decidedly secondary. The whole notion could be conveyed by a smile or by a pleasant intonation more readily than by the words themselves. Teleological treatment which one might have been tempted to employ under the circumstances would first have stressed the fact that the fear was foolish-would say with a great show of objective justice, "Well, there's no use in our doing anything; the fault is that your fear is foolish and improbable. Get over that"³³ (as a judge would say, "Come into court with clean hands"); "then if there's anything sensible we can do, we'll see,"³⁴ with smug blame implied in every word. Or more kindly, it would try to reason with the woman in an attempt to help her get over it--the business of propaganda directed towards change even before the situation is fully understood (may be as a lazy substitute for understanding). Or, still more kindly, the teleological method would try to understand the fear casually. But with the non-teleological treatment there is only the love and understanding of instant acceptance; after that

fundamental has been achieved, the next step, if any should be necessary, can be considered more sensibly.

Strictly, the term non-teleological thinking ought not to be applied to what we have in mind. Because it involves more than thinking, that term is inadequate. Modus operandi might be better — a method of handling data of any sort. The example cited just above concerns feeling more than thinking. The method extends beyond thinking even itself; in fact, by inferred definition it transcends the realm of thinking possibilities, it postulates "living into."

In the destitute-unemployed illustration, thinking, as being the evaluatory function chiefly concerned, was the point of departure, "the crust to break through." There the "blame approach" considered the situation in the limited and inadequate teleological manner. The non-teleological method included that viewpoint as correct but limited. But when it came to the feeling aspects of a human relation situation, the non-teleological method would probably ameliorate the woman's fears in a loving, truly mellow, and adequate fashion, whereas the teleological would have tended to bungle things by employing the limited and sophisticated approach.

Incidentally, there is in this connection a remarkable etiological similarity to be noted between cause in thinking and blame in feeling. One feels that one's neighbors are to be blamed for their hate or anger or fear. One thinks that poor pavements are "caused" by politics. The non-teleological picture in either case is the larger one that goes beyond blame or cause. And the non-causal or non-blaming viewpoint seems to us very often relatively to represent the "new thing" the Hegelian "Christ-child" which arises emergently from the union of two

opposing viewpoints, such as those of physical and spiritual teleologies, especially if there is conflict as to causation between the two or within either. The new viewpoint very frequently sheds light over a larger picture, providing a key which may unlock levels not accessible to either of the teleological viewpoints. There are interesting parallels here: to the triangle, to the Christian ideas of trinity, to Hegel's dialectic, and to Swedenborg's metaphysic of divine love (feeling) and divine wisdom (thinking).

The factors we have been considering as "answers" seem to be merely symbols or indices, relational aspects of thing—of which they are integral parts—not to be considered in terms of causes and effects. The truest reason for anything's being so is that it is. This is actually and truly a reason, more valid and clearer than all the other separate reasons, or than any group of them short of the whole. Anything less than the whole forms part of the picture only, and the infinite whole is unknowable except by being it, by loving into it.

A thing may be so "because" of a thousand and one reasons of greater or lesser importance, such as the man oversized because of glandular insufficiency. The integration of these many reasons which are in the nature of relations rather than reasons is that he is. The separate reasons, no matter how valid, are only fragmentary parts of the picture. And the whole necessarily includes all that it impinges on as object and subject, in ripples fading with distance or depending upon the original intensity of the vortex.

The frequent illusions to an underlying pattern have no implication of mysticism—except inasmuch as a pattern which comprises infinity in factors and symbols might be called mystic. But infinity as here used occurs also in the

mathematical aspects of physiology and physics, both far away from mysticism as the term is ordinarily employed. Actually, the underlying pattern is probably nothing more than an integration of just such symbols and indices and mutual reference points as are already known, except that its power is n . Such an integration might include nothing more spectacular than we already know. But, equally, it could include anything even events and entities as different from those already known as the vectors, tensors, scalars, and ideas of electrical charges in mathematical physics are different from the mechanical-model world of the Victorian scientists.

In such a pattern, causality would be merely a name for something that exists only in our partial and biased mental reconstructings. The pattern which it indexes, however, would be real, but not intellectually appreciable because the pattern goes everywhere and is everything and cannot be encompassed by finite mind or by anything short of life—which it is.

The psychic or spiritual residua remaining after the most careful physical analyses, or the physical remnants obvious, particularly to us of the twentieth century, in the most honest and disciplined spiritual speculations of medieval philosophers, all bespeak such a pattern. Those residua, those most minute differentials, the 0.001 percentages which suffice to maintain the races of sea animals, are seen finally to be the most important things in the world, not because of their sizes, but because they are everywhere. The differential is the true universal, the true catalyst, the cosmic solvent. Any investigation carried far enough will bring to light these residua, or rather will leave them still unassailable as Emerson remarked a hundred years ago in "The Oversoul"—will run into the

brick wall of the impossibility of perfection while at the same time insisting on the validity of perfection. Anomalies especially testify to that framework; they are the commonest intellectual vehicles for breaking through; all are solvable in the sense that any one is understandable, but that one leads with the power *n* to still more and deeper anomalies.

This deep underlying pattern inferred by non-teleological thinking crops up everywhere—a relational thing, surely, relating opposing factors on different levels, as reality and potential are related. But it must not be considered as causative, it simply exists, it is, things are merely expressions of it as is expressions of it as them. And they are it, also. As Swinburne, extolling Hertha, the earth goddess, makes her say: "Man, equal and one with me, man that is made of me, man that is I."³⁵ so all things which are that—which is all—equally may be extolled. That pattern materializes everywhere in the sense that Eddington finds the non-integer *q* "number" appearing everywhere, in the background of all fundamental equations,³⁶ in the sense that the speed of light, constant despite compoundings or subtractions, seemed at one time almost to be conspiring against investigation.

The whole is necessarily everything, the whole world of fact and fancy, body and psyche, physical fact and spiritual truth, individual and collective, life and death, macrocosm and microcosm (the greatest quanta here, the greatest synapse between these two), conscious and unconscious, subject and object. The whole picture is portrayed by *is*, the deepest word of deep ultimate reality, not shallow or partial as reasons are, but deeper and participating, possibly encompassing the oriental concepts of being.

And all this against the hot beach on an Easter Sunday, with the passing day and the passing time. This little trip of ours was becoming a thing and a dual thing, with collecting and eating and sleeping merging with the thinking - speculating activity. Quality of sunlight, blueness and smoothness of water, boat engines, and ourselves were all parts of a larger whole and we could begin to feel its nature but not its size.

Although "breaking through" has been acknowledged by critics, it has not often been taken seriously as a driving force in John Steinbeck's literature. Some have said Steinbeck was inconsistent,³⁷ expressing a belief in the kind of non-teleological thinking necessary for "breaking through", yet committing on the practical level to the more teleological approach of social activism to bring about real change. Richard Astro, for instance, tries to reconcile this inconsistency by saying that "breaking through" was never Steinbeck's philosophy in the first place, but that of Ed Ricketts; and, although it attracted Steinbeck because of his great affection for Ricketts, it was discarded when Steinbeck had to come to grips with real social problems.³⁸ All Steinbeck retained as his own of non-teleological thinking, argues Astro, was its usefulness as a way of approaching a problem.

Yet this view does not explain away the experience that Steinbeck evidently had in *Sea of Cortez* or why this experience makes its way into so many of his works, not just as a method of collecting materials but as a driving force. Nor does it account for the evidence that Steinbeck thought in terms of a greater reality of which he could be a part long before Ed Ricketts became an influence. In April of 1924, for example, Steinbeck wrote to his friend Carl Wilhelmsen:-

It would be desirable to be flung, unfettered by consciousness, into the void, to sail unhindered through eternity. Please do not think that I am riding along on

baseless words, covering threadbare thought with garrulous tapestries. I am not. It is the words which are inadequate.³⁹

Other early examples can be found in original versions of To a God Unknown, and in the version finally published. For example, at the Indians' festivals, Joseph Wayne thinks to himself: "We have found something here all of us. In some way we've come closer to earth for a moment...Something will come of this....It's a kind of powerful prayer."⁴⁰ Later, in explaining to Elizabeth this awe-inspiring experience that unites, yet somehow frightens, he says: "I think there were things hidden today....The dance was timeless, do you know?—a thing eternal, breaking through to vision for a day."⁴¹

Robert Gentry points out that Steinbeck used non-teleological thinking "before he met Ricketts in the late 1930s and continued after Ricketts's death in 1948."⁴² In Tortilla Flat, published in 1935, the paisanos characterize the ideas that are reflected in the definition of "is" thinking written much later in The Log: the love of freedom, the acceptance of things as they are, living in the present, a rejection of materialism, a oneness with nature, and passion to protect the bonds of friendship.

Although Steinbeck does not claim to be a religious man, there is much evidence that he was, in spite of protestations to the contrary, drawn to this almost religious and certainly mystical insight called "breaking through". Although the term itself had been taken from Robinson Jeffers's "Roan Stallion" and used by Ed Ricketts, John Steinbeck made it his own to describe a philosophy that shaped not only his personal exploration and journey, but his writing as well. It dictated his literary viewpoint, his central motifs, and his social and political passions. It made him kin to other thinkers who, consumed with the brilliance of a new

insight, struggled to invent terms that would, however inadequately, express the inexpressible. This vision of truth, as Steinbeck struggled so hard to communicate it, is most clearly articulated in one of his least understood works, *The Log from the Sea of Cortez*, yet it is echoed and "preached" in his novels, as well. Any discussion of Steinbeck the social reformer, Steinbeck the artist/writer, Steinbeck the journeyer, Steinbeck the marine biologist, remains inconclusive without a deep appreciation for and genuine understanding of Steinbeck the philosopher.

To recognize this philosophy in his work, one needs to discuss its principals. "Breaking through" has three stages of development. The first is an awareness of the "connectedness" and "all-embracingness" of all living and nonliving things. This awareness gives an appreciation of the organism and each cell's function in that larger whole, but soon leads to a second discovery: even the organism is not the whole story. There are contradictions that do not fit the prescribed cataloguing. While observing nature, one finds that systems, theories, and preheld beliefs are paralyzing. What must be found, says Steinbeck, is a new way of thinking that reserves judgment and makes room for seeming contradictions. One must accept only what is without cataloguing—without fitting organism and phenomena into predefined categories—for only them may one move to the third stage, an overwhelming experience of "breaking through the crust" (a phrase Steinbeck and Ricketts borrow from Jeffers) of what is to a realization of a grand and paradoxical Big Picture, a "new thing."

I believe it is this "breaking through" that gives birth to Steinbeck's unconquerable belief in the perfectibility of man and his fierce commitment to timshel in spite of his living at a most pessimistic time in history. A more

thorough discussion of each of these three stages of "breaking through" should shed light on much of what has erroneously been called contradictory and even inconsistent in Steinbeck's writing. Instead, "breaking through" unifies and gives power to Steinbeck's varied and multidimensional work. Finding strong examples of his philosophy in his work refutes, too the argument that Steinbeck discarded this belief when faced with real social issues.

Long before Earth Day and the ecological awareness forced upon us by the man-caused illness of our planet, Steinbeck was already preaching the gospel of interrelatedness. Perhaps the greatest early evidence of Steinbeck's ecological passion and belief in the connectedness of all natural things is his long overlooked second novel, To a God Unknown, which has as its central theme man's union with and responsibility for the earth and, eventually, the necessity of sacrifice and atonement to redeem it.

Far beyond collecting specimens of particular species for observation and cataloguing, Steinbeck and Ricketts in their voyage on the Sea of Cortez were drawn by a new awareness of the relationship of animal to animal. Steinbeck writes:

If one observes in the relational sense, it seems apparent that species are only commas in a sentence, that each species is at once the point. If one observes in the relational sense, it seems apparent that species are only commas in a sentence, that each species is at once the point and the base of a pyramid, that all life is relational.... One merges into another, groups melt into ecological groups until the time when what we know as life meets and enters what we think of as non-life: barnacle and rock, rock and earth, earth and tree, tree and rain and air. And the units nestle into the whole and are inseparable from it. ⁴³

In *Travels with Charley* Steinbeck prophetically cites the new challenges to Americans as being in "traffic-choked streets, skies nested in smog, choking with acids of industry, the screech of rubber, and houses leashed in against one another while the townlets wither in time and die."⁴⁴ According to Steinbeck, then, not only are species and whole animal kingdoms interrelated, but all nature—living and nonliving—is tied together. He recognizes the colony model found in marine life as being analogous to the behavior of man endangered by threatening forces beyond his control; and in *Of Mice and Men*, *In Dubious Battle*, *The Red Pony*, and *The Grapes of Wrath* he describes the interrelatedness of human beings and demonstrates their changed behavior when they become not individuals but "cells" in the "organism," group-man led by a specialized cell called "the leader of the people." Such characters as Mac, Grandfather, Ma, Will Hamilton, and Mac and Dora typify such concepts.

But beyond the relatedness of members of a particular needy group, Steinbeck seeks an interrelatedness of all groups. Casy in *The Grapes of Wrath*, Juana in *The Pearl*, Doc Burton in *In Dubious Battle*, Slim in *Of Mice and Men*, Joseph in *To a God Unknown*, and Sam Hamilton and Lee in *East of Eden* all give testimony to the connectedness of all things and express an understanding of the concept; the owners of orchards are ultimately themselves hurt by the mistreatment of migrant workers; "using people" for the benefit of the group-man's cause ultimately will devour the group man and his cause; plowing under sharecroppers' homes in Okla- homa will eventually inject a toxin into the muscle of America. In the tide pool, on *Cannery Row*, in the ranch house where the Lennies of this world are dispensable, there is an interrelatedness that transcends the immediate social

problem. Greed, destruction, selfishness, pollution, bigotry, violence and waste are self-inflicted wounds that ultimately prove as fatal to the strong as to the weak. Steinbeck makes a distinction between these and "natural selection," which he said is ultimately kind and benevolent.

An important link between his first important concept connectedness –and the next is Steinbeck's recognition of the inconsistencies and contradictions that are found in nature and in human nature. This discovery led him to be suspicious of simplistic systems, rigid dogmas or even "scientific," cataloguing. He developed a healthy cynicism that caused him to reject stereotypical categorizing or any kind of reasoning that begins with as "answer" or an assumption of what "should be". He believed that to suspend such reasoning, thought it offers a "safer" harbor, and only believe what it makes way for the discovery of new truth. To begin with the general assumption and force the specifics into ready-made systems often too hastily ignores the contradictions and tends to reject the paradoxes. Steinbeck calls teleological thinkers "catalogers" who

in their sometimes intolerant refusal to face fact as they are ... may substitute a fierce but ineffectual attempt to change conditions which are assumed to be undesirable, in place of the understanding acceptance which would pave the way for a more sensible attempt at any change which might still be indicated.⁴⁵

Steinbeck seems to insist in contrast, that non teleological thinking does not force the observer to ignore, twist, or manipulate what is into categories of cause and effect conclusion to fit some predisposed system. It leaves room for a greater truth yet to be revealed and dares to admit and with seeming contradiction because it does not have to answer the question "why" but only "what" and "how". However, says Steinbeck, many people won't dare to risk this kind of

thinking and the sometimes "ruthless-appearing notions which may arise" because of fear of being "left dangling out in space, deprived of emotional support as had been afforded them by unthinking belief"⁴⁶ in the tidy assumption and systems thought to be true. This consent to explore the uncharted, unpredictable territory of what is led Steinbeck (and Ricketts) to observe and record, without fitting into moralistic or previously accepted scientific systems, the things they found in nature and in society. Free of the "why" assumptions, they found a sort of compassion, a "great tenderness of an all-embracingness"⁴⁷ rare in thought processes that have to make value judgments, prove cause and effect, and fit into systems of dogma.

Steinbeck is able to see in the tide pool the microcosm of all things: individual and interrelated, vicious and kind, paradoxical and compatible. He sees things that had been assumed to be answers as only shallow understandings of surface observation. He learns, instead, that by less secure "is thinking,"⁴⁸ he is able to accept a depth and clarity beyond personal assumption, and events become not "effect" of some presupposed "cause" but outgrowths of what is. He sees pattern for which a claim of causality "would be merely a name for something that exists only in our partial and biased reconstructions".⁴⁹ He came to believe that everything is an index of everything else.

In studying specifics without cataloguing and teleological assumptions, Steinbeck is led, then, to the final discovery. In accepting what is, he discovers (or is invaded by) a larger *is-ness*, a realization that there is whole bigger than the sum of all the parts. He gains this realization only partly by observing what is and accepting what is; there comes to him almost a revelation, an insight far grander

that any deductions from his research. He discovers that "anything less than the whole forms part of the picture only, and the infinite whole is unknowable except by being it, by living into it.⁵⁰ He calls this realization "breaking through" in *The Log* but other terms for it can be found in his other works. In *East of Eden* he calls these moments of insight "a kind of glory that lights up the mind of man."⁵¹ It is that "something" that is bigger, grander transcendent of persons or the totality of people—bigger than life, yet gives life and people meaning, a glory that "lights up the world and changes it the way a star shell changes a battleground."⁵² The individual is not "it" but is part of it, attests to it, and therefore, of infinite value. Steinbeck differentiates between the collective and the larger realization. He does not call his larger consciousness "God," but of the "glory" moments and the "breaking through" them he says: "It is the mother of all creativeness, and it sets each man separate from all other men". Lester Jay Marks points out that in his writing—as in his scientific exploration—Steinbeck's method is

to create series of relational events that happened. His novels do not say what should be but only what is. But the reader is enabled by this method to see the intrinsic order of life within the novel and is further enabled to perceive how this order is at once a reflection of and is inseparable from the nature of all things.⁵³

But this thinking is reflected in more than just Steinbeck's "method". In *The Grapes of Wrath* Tom "breaks through" to something bigger than the organized struggle of laborers, something big enough to demand his life, yet so big that loosing his life for it would only multiply his existence.⁵⁴ In *Travels with Charley* Steinbeck, like a scientist observing what is in a tide pool, collects his "specimens" humanity without presuppositions until a realization of a greater illness overwhelms him, and he has to admit then that

what I carried in my head and deeper in my perceptions was a barrel of worms.

I discovered long ago in collecting and classifying marine animals that what I found was closely intermeshed with how I felt at the moment. External reality has a way of being not so external after all.⁵⁵

In *The Log*, Steinbeck names this Big Thing the “all truth which admits infinite change or expansion as added relation become apparent.”⁵⁶ He talks about the “deep thing” as a “going home,” terms reminiscent of C. S. Lewis’s, “walking through the wardrobe” (or *Chronicles of Narnia*) or Lewis Carroll’s “passing through the looking glass.” Other philosophers have called that to which Steinbeck “broke through” the Ground of Being.⁵⁷ This term, perhaps more than others, reflects the depth of Steinbeck’s meaning when he uses the term “is-thinking”—living and thinking with an awareness of the great *is*-ness beyond what can be presently observed or understood.

Steinbeck says that the criteria for validity are still best stated, “It’s so because it’s so.”⁵⁸ This statement seems to imply that particulars and specifics, observations and behaviors are accepted as part of ultimate reality, and viewed as part of the Big Thing of which we and all things are a part but which is bigger than the sum of all the parts. A thousand observable things may be related or even illustrative of the *is*, but they could never cause it or limit it or box it into a manageable fact; instead, observable facts are only “ripples fading with distance or depending upon the original intensity of the vortex”.⁵⁹ This view lifts thinking above the “blame approach,” above cataloguing, above established systems. The “non-causal or non-blaming view point seems to us,” say Steinbeck and Ricketts, “very often relatively to represent the ‘new thing,’ the Hegelian ‘Christ child’

which arises emergently from the union of two opposing viewpoints, such as those physical and spiritual teleologies.”⁶⁰

There is a price to pay for this deifying moment of insight called “breaking through,” this transcendent participation. Richard Astro cites an article by Ed Ricketts⁶¹ in which Ricketts says that “breaking through” must come through intense struggle, that this struggle must be filled with integrity, and that “breaking through requires waiting”—it must come in its own time. In the meantime, the questing, struggling person must live with constant insecurity and cannot place a valid prior evaluation on anything, yet this insecurity must be recognized as a symbol of the eternal struggle that is necessary to the ultimate “breaking through” to that new thing that is “nameless, outside of time” and “near immortality”⁶²

This struggling process can be seen in Steinbeck’s own writing, for in his earlier works there is a starkness—as in *Of Mice and Men* and *In Dubious Battle*—in which we see man as part of the organism; the style of these novels reflects this thinking, but somehow we see that men as group-man, driven only by the “conservation and insurance of their own survival,” are really not human. Steinbeck seems to be writing out of that frightening space where one is, for a time, suspended before “breaking through.” But it is not being a part of the group-animal that makes men human, but the “cosmic quest,” the pursuit of that *something more* to wholistic tenderness. What we feel in *Cannery Row* and *The Pearl* is that man is more than an organism functioning for survival, no matter how unified. In *The Grapes of Wrath* Steinbeck seems to have cast his lot for more than just survival, but for compassion and the triumph of the *spiritual* organism. This new breakthrough as Casy and (later) Tom discover, transcends in

the teleological sense the old laws of right and wrong that a mere organism must have for efficient function and survival, to a cosmic law that offers to a stranger outside the "colony" of the organism the milk of human kindness left overflowing in the human spirit, even in the face of death.

It is typical of Steinbeck-and it is typical of California- that he can study biology and speculate about teleology without loosing his interest in, or fellowship with, Mack and the boys. His biggest contribution as a writer may turn out to have been the exploration and colonization of the no-man's land between intellectual and non-intellectual, rational and sub rational.

Undoubtedly Steinbeck's non-teleological speculations serve as an effective instrument to unlock the mysteries of the vast domain of his fictional world.

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CHAPTER 4

THE THEORY OF GROUP-ORGANISM

Non-teleological thinking enabled Steinbeck to see life steadily and as a whole and the result is a unique understanding of social dynamism. As one interested in marine biology, he happened to observe instances of corporate and co-operate life presented by the tide pools. He observed schools of fish and their behaviors and came to the conclusion that there is a fallacy in a usual way of thinking about fish as individuals. The school itself is an animal. The parts serve the whole by the special function they perform. Inevitably Steinbeck gravitates towards the disturbing and thought-provoking concept of the group-animal, suggested first through *Doc Burton of In Dubious Battle*. This group-man concept informs most of Steinbeck's books like *Tortilla Flat*, *In Dubious Battle*, *Of Mice and Men*, *The Grapes of Wrath* and *Cannery Row*. The passions, the migrant Okies, bums like Mack and the boys, do not merit serious consideration as individuals. They are significant because of their group existence. Such groups are integrated units which have separate identities distinct from those individuals composing them.

This idea is unknown to totalitarian set-ups where the individuals are in the name of nationalism or communism, atomized to form highly disciplined and subservient groups. But Steinbeck's groupman-theory emphasises the element of voluntary union. Thus it is unique as one of Steinbeck's basic postulates leading to his image of man. As Frederick Carpenter eulogizes,

This group idea is American, not Russian, and stems from Walt Whitman, not Karl Marx. But it does include some elements that have usually seemed sinful to orthodox Anglo-Saxons.¹

But to the rigid, Caste-Oriented Indian Consciousness this concept does not seem to alien.

Study of biology also leads Steinbeck to a reverence for life and to apprehend its unity. Further, the tide pools make him aware of the dynamic energy and strength involved in all living organism. All living things, including men, he notes, are having the irresistible urge to evolve themselves into better forms. He visualises the life force at work. The inevitability of change and evolution makes the arena of life one of perpetual flux and struggle. By studying the evolutionary pattern, he arrives at strange conclusion. The survival quotient of animals and fish astonishes him. It is greater when the "fighting, crawling resisting qualities" are particularly determined and ferocious. With the help of such logical postulates, he projects the "ethical paradox" confronting man. The qualities of wisdom, tolerance, kindness, generosity and humanity are almost universally acknowledged as "good", but in human society, they "invariably" lead to failure. Social success attends those who have the bad qualities of cruelty, greed, selfishness and rapacity. In other words, it is an over-development of the "survival" qualities that guarantees success.

In an animal other than man we would replace the term 'good' with 'weak survival quotient' and the term 'bad' with strong survival quotient."²

The above paradox, adduced by him as a result of his study of the tide pools, influences his vision of life and conditions his image of man.

Steinbeck's recognition of the 'ethical paradox' of man was born out of the biological analogy. His image of human life as 'group man' *In Dubious Battle* stemmed from such analogies. The analogy also appears in playful ways elsewhere. Watt points out;

As the novelist sees them, communities like *Tortilla Flat* and *Cannery Row*, in Monterey are not merely aggregates of individuals- they are corporate beings,

like schools of fish or like variegated, complex, interdependent colonies of marine creatures in a tide pool, through which messages, information, moods and awareness of needs travel by unknown means with inexplicable rapidity . . .

Even such a realistically and rather more somberly portrayed community as that of *The Pastures of Heaven* has characteristics of organic life suggestive of the marine analogy.³

The workers in *In Dubious Battle* take on a unity which changes them from individual units to a collective whole. Jim describes the mob in action: "It was like all of them disappeared, and it was just one big animal, going down the road. Just all one animal".⁴ And Mack approves: "It is a big animal. It is different from the men in it".⁵ *In The Grapes of Wrath* we see the groupman moving westwards neglecting the ruin of his individual 'calls', but unified in his basic compulsion.

The artistic stimulus that Steinbeck found in his biological studies is first articulated in a letter to his friend, Carlton Sheffield, dated June 21, 1933. Three years of random scientific observation had suddenly taken a clear philosophical direction so that he now felt the urge to seek what he called "the symbolism of fiction,"⁶ to act as a vehicle for them. These observations and experiments were derived largely from study of the coral insect, but in the context of the United States in the Depression, they all have obvious human and political dimensions. These are three main issues of importance, the first of which he called the group or phalanx idea. This concerns the properties of a group organism and their difference from the properties of the individual units that compose the group. The ideological extension of this interest in the society of the 1930 may be variously viewed as the clash of totalitarianism and individualism and of communal and selfish behaviour. The second concern is advantages and disadvantages of non-

teleological thinking. The third of Steinbeck's biological themes is a holistic sense of the unity and interdependency of all life forms and their environment. It appears early in Steinbeck's fiction as an instinctive veneration of the natural world by man: however, when this kind of pantheism is placed in the contemporary context of the decay of agrarian life, the mechanization, industrialization, and depoillage of land, it clearly may provoke political as well as religious responses. None of these biological concerns ever became systematized for Steinbeck into rigid theories; they are constantly re-examined in his fiction in changing circumstances. However, the fact that these circumstances include Communist efforts to organize a strike among fruit-pickers and the exploitation of migrants who are forced off their land lures the reader of Steinbeck to measure him against the orthodoxies of his time, even if his progress was oblique and unorthodox.

Steinbeck's interest in the phenomenon of groups' behaviour was certainly not new to American fiction, as Mark Twain's description of the mob in *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* will testify: "The pitifulest thing out is a mob . . . they don't fight with courage that's born in them, but with courage that's borrowed from their mass".⁷ In the 1930s a more positive characterization of group behavior emerged in the many proletarian novels that dealt with the solidarity of the union, where workers could acquire dignity, strength and power, all inaccessible to the exploited and impotent individual. What distinguishes Steinbeck's interest is group man from either of these examples is his reluctance to attach any moral judgement to the group phenomenon.

"Man", wrote Steinbeck, "unlike any other thing organic or inorganic in the universe, grows beyond his work, walks up the stairs of his concepts, emerges ahead of his accomplishments."⁸ The Grapes of Wrath is Steinbeck's affirmation that man's life has meaning beyond material existence. And it is revealing of Steinbeck's development as an artist and as a thinker that these conclusions, implicit in The Grapes of Wrath, arise out of the same rational and scientific approach to life with which I have identified him all along. In The Grapes of Wrath he has illustrated how groups could effectively ensure their survival in predatory society only if they sustained a conscious will to survive and only if they followed leaders whose individuality provide them with a clear sight of the purpose of their struggle. These twin necessities satisfied, man could in fact inch forward in material and spiritual evolution. It is no wonder then that Steinbeck reacted bitterly to the war, a war "out of all control of intelligence". War for Steinbeck, was futile. He believed, as Doc Burton had expressed in In Dubious Battle, that "you can only build a violent thing with violence".⁹ Men in war are not groupman exercising their survival instinct, but are "herd men"¹⁰ fed on the illusion that killing will end the killing, all the while manifesting their drive towards self extinction. Steinbeck recognized "the sad trait of self destruction that is in our species,"¹¹ but he denounced it. In what appears now to have been an almost symbolic last act before the United States entered the war, Steinbeck returned to Mexico immediately after his marine expedition to work on the documentary, The Forgotten Village. The film was a poignant illustration of man's potential for helping his fellowman to wage a different kind of war-a war against ignorance, poverty, and disease

In *In Dubious Battle*, Dr. Burton compares social injustices to the physiological injustice of syphilis or amoebic dysentery, and he insists that to cure either, one must first study and see. Nor is it enough to study the pathogenic organisms in the testtube; one must observe them in interaction with a body and grasp the whole pattern. Hence he goes to the seat of the wound, the strike, and he studies the vigilantes as enthusiastically as he does the strikers.

In explaining to Mac why he works for the strikers without really believing in their causes, Dr. Burton touches on one of the speculations elaborated in *Sea of Cortez*. This is the idea of group-man, and it is an idea which has deeply stirred Steinbeck's imagination. Apparently it developed out of conversations with Ricketts, and some of the biological data out of which the concept grew are recorded in *Between Pacific Tides*, "an account of the habits and habitats of some five hundred of the common, conspicuous seashore invertibrates of the Pacific Coast."¹² In a discussion of the aggregating, or intertwining, habits of brittle stars (*Amphiodia Occidentalis*) Ricketts refers to studies made by Dr. W.C. Allee¹³ which "lead us to the border line of the metaphysical." Groups of brittle stars bring about "a degree of resistance to untoward conditions that is not attainable by isolated individuals,"¹⁴ by giving of a protective material which passes through ordinary filter paper and persists after the filtrate is boiled. It is apparently similar to antibodies, and it is capable of conferring protection from poisons to isolated animals which, by themselves can not produce the protective substance. Ricketts uses their discovery to explain his own observation that, while individual anemones can be readily anesthetized, a group shows great resistance and even ultimately renders the pans in which they are kept unfit for use in anesthetizing.

To summarize, there is evidence that a group of animals performs biological functions of which the individual animals are incapable.

Dr. Burton in In Dubious Battle, quite explicitly presents such an idea :

I want to watch these group-men [the strikers], for they seem to me to be a new individual, not at all like single men. A man in a group isn't himself at all, he's a cell in organism that isn't like him any more than the cells in your body are like you.... It might be like this, Mac: When group-man wants to move, he makes a standard. 'God wills that we re-capture the holy land; or he says 'We fight to make the world safe for democracy; or he says, 'We will wipe out social injustice with communism'. But the group doesn't care about the Holy Land, or Democracy or Communism. May be the group simply wants to move, to fight, and uses these words simply to reassure the brains of individual men, I say it might be like that Mac. ¹⁵

The nature and desires of group-man are not the same as those of the individuals.

"The pleasure we get in scratching an itch causes death to a great number of cells.

May be group-man gets pleasure when individuals are wiped out in a war." ¹⁶

Though the strikers constitute a group-animal, they may also be only one part of a

still larger group-animal -the total society of which they are one force.

Similarly, the school of fish, "an animal itself, reacting with all its cells to stimuli

which perhaps might not influence one fish at all", may be a part of a larger unit

which is as, explained in Sea of Cortez, "-the interrelation of species with their

interdependence for food, even though that food be each other. A smoothly

working larger animal surviving within itself-larval shrimp to little fish to larger

fish to giant fish-one operating mechanism. And perhaps this unit of survival may

key into the larger animal which is the life of all the sea, and this into the larger of

the world." ¹⁷

To study group-man, a scientist must try his best to keep from being a mere cell in that organism. The tragedy is that an individual is not able to isolate himself completely from the larger organism, nor yet control it; and he is affected, often mortally in Steinbeck's novels, by what group-man does. So, in Of Mice and Men, George does, knowingly, what group-man makes it necessary for him to do, even though it is bad in itself. So in The Grapes of Wrath, men do evil things driven by the demands of an organism which they compose, but which is larger than themselves.

The bank is something else than the men. It happens that every man in a bank hates what the bank does, and yet the bank does it. The bank is something more than men, I tell you. It's the monster. Men made it, but they can't control it.¹⁸

The grandfather who was "The Leader of the People" (The Long Valley) is left an empty shell when the westering group-animal of which he was a part has spent its force. And the Nazis in The Moon is Down are not so much evil in themselves (to the great annoyance of many reviewers) as cell in a group-animal bent on evil of an immensity impossible to any single human being.

Though Steinbeck clearly hates capitalist exploitation and attacks bourgeois virtues, he is far from being an orthodox leftist. The inconclusive struggle between strikers and the town is truly a dubious battle; and while the reader's sympathy is directed unmistakably toward the strikers, Dr. Burton is there to remind us to be shocked at all mechanized inhumanity of the Communist Organizers. The exploitation of the apple pickers is undoubtedly bad, but so are cancer and tetanus. The cruelty of the vigilantes is bad, but Steinbeck makes it clear that they are only tools of the owners; they are parts of an organism larger

than themselves, and they follow the drivers and direction of the larger organism. So with the owners and vigilantes of *The Grapes of Wrath*. Steinbeck hates the system of which they are natural manifestations, but his severest charge against them personally is that they have become de-humanized, have lost the vitality and initiative and adaptability of good biological specimens of the human species. This, it appears from the novels generally, is the true sin against the Holy Ghost-to become so sunk in the social organism as to loose one's biological individuality.

Steinbeck's attitude to communism was like the ancient Greek citizen's attitude to politics. "In the winning of his livelihood he was essentially individualist: in the filling of his life he was essentially 'communist'."¹⁹ Steinbeck's sources of inspiration were Marxist only in passing; the roots were in Emerson and Whitman. The novels of social protest. *In Dubious Battle* and *The Grapes of Wrath*, had their roots in his own native ground. Through his intimacy with the poor and the outcasts, Steinbeck learned to like them, caught the trick of their speech and gestures, shared their joys, sorrows and their dreams. *The Grapes of Wrath* is a testament of love and sacrifice, and not of mere Wrath.

Steinbeck was deeply moved by the unhappy lot of the migrants.

Even before *Of Mice and Men* and *The Grapes of Wrath*, he wrote a number of articles on the migrant laborers for the San Francisco News.²⁰ No one was better suited for the job than Steinbeck:

He knew the work: he knew the people, he knew the bitterness. He felt them in the marrow of his bones. He also had a deep affectionate sense of identification with the fruit-pickers; and he was a California; and he felt a responsibility.²¹

Steinbeck felt the responsibility so much that he wrote his agent Elizabeth Otis. "I must go over into the interior valleys. There are five thousand starving to death

over there, not just hungry but actually starving." He was so angry with "The Fascist group of utilities and banks and huge growers" that he wanted to "do something to know these murderers on the heads."²²

Steinbeck's novel *The Pearl* (1947) too displays his concept of the group-man. But here, in addition to the idea that the pearl buyers are a group, we have the picture of an individual trying to break away from the group. Kino wants to get out of the stifling Indian village. His attempt to sell the pearl is considered by his brother as a revolt against everything. "You have defied," he says, "not the pearl buyers, but the whole structure, the whole way of life, and I am afraid for you."²³ Kino, then has risen against two groups. The fear of the Indians is easily understood. Centuries of ignorance and poverty have made them accept their present status. The white Spanish population represents the same commercial class that is obliquely condemned in *Cannery Row*. Kino dreams that he will break through both the barriers. He can only break his knuckles against the iron gates of prosperity. An individual has no chance against an organized profiteering system. Knowing this Mack and the boys have developed the philosophy of contentment with what is available. They survive and cheerfully, too, in the midst of "ambition and nervousness and covetousness."²⁴ Kino learns the lesson the hard way. After he refuses to sell his pearl in the town, his brother asks him; "But suppose you are correct-suppose your pearl is of great value-do you think then the game is over?"²⁵ If La Paz could offer so much trouble to a pearl fisher, how much more could the Capital Give? The merchants of the Capital might succeed in destroying Kino. The wisdom of his brother is

unheeded by Kino. He feels outraged. "Oh, my brother, an insult has been put on me that is deeper than my life. For on the beach my canoe is broken, my house is burned,"²⁶ he reacts. Having killed a man he is left with no option but to escape. When he flies north, he is pursued. The pursuit is only another instance of the ruthlessness of the profiteers. Until the pearl is thrown back into the sea Kino has no peace.

The Pearl is an allegory of the individual's struggle for survival against fierce competition. At the time of writing the novel Steinbeck saw no chance of the individual's success. Sympathy for his suffering and the plight of the ignorant Indian fishermen are reminiscent of Joads and Tom, and the villagers of Santiago and Juan Diego, the boy in *A Forgotten Village*. The difference is that Kino does not rebel on behalf of the whole community. It is his own private enterprise in which he fails. He realizes that after all the pursuit of wealth requires the sacrifice of the very people for whose sake he wants wealth-his child, and probably, his wife. Though defeated in his purpose he is, morally, victorious.

It appears as if Steinbeck is suggesting that while an individual has every right to strike out a path for himself, he should realize his role as a member of a community. For man is a double thing, and he can not successfully be an individual before he has been a part of the group. It is with this attitude that *The Wayward Bus* is also written. Like *The Pearl* it is also an allegory, as it is made clear in the epigraph,

I pray you all gyve audyence,
And here this matter with reverence,
By figure a moral playe;
The somonyng of Everyman called it is,

That of our lyves and endyng shewes

How transitory we be all daye.²⁷

The moral is that every individual should learn to behave as part of one group.

The Wayward Bus tells of people who refuse to form a group even in times of need.

The individual's acceptance of the group though a painful realization of the biological truth that if life goes on, though individuals may perish, is dramatised in Burning Bright. Joe Saul is proud of his family, his blood and the child to be born. Learning of his wife's pregnancy, he shouts excitedly, "My immortality is preserved . . . And it will be a piece of me, and more, of all I came from-the blood stream, the pattern of me, of us, like a shining filament of spider silk hanging down from the incredible ages."²⁸ But his dream of personal immortality is shattered when he learns that he is sterile and Mordean's child is not his child. Joe Saul breaks down. "My line, my blood, all the procession of the ages is dead. And I am waiting for a little while and then I die."²⁹ Friend Ed condemns Saul's ego and asks him to accept the gift to love. He tells him, " -only great men have the courage and courtesy and, yes, the generosity to receive."³⁰ At last Saul confesses, " . . . I had to walk into the darkness to know-to know that every man is father to all children and every child must have all men as father. This is not a little piece of private property, registered and fenced and separated. This is not the child."³¹ He understands the unity of all life preached by Jim Mordean! This is the child.³² He understands the unity of all life preached by Jim Casy. "It is the race, the species that must go on," ³² says Joe Saul. The holiness of life is accepted, Ed through his compassion for Saul, and Mordean through her love bring this realization for him.³³

Burning Bright makes the end of a phase in Steinbeck's career as a writer. "It reveals in positive terms his mystic conception of the unity of all life in the group animal, especially as this conception was presented in To A God Unknown, The Grapes of Wrath and Sea of Cortez."³⁴

East of Eden presents Steinbeck in a contrasting facet of his role as story telling craftsman. The longest of his novels, it manages to be intimate and personal in tone, establishing itself as a kind of genial father-confessor among his books. The contrast with In Dubious Battle is complete; one is diffuse in interest as the other is impact ; the later is full of Conventional perambulations as the earlier is severely shorn of such devices. A diary Steinbeck kept for the benefit of his editor during the composition of East of Eden, and published posthumously, throws curiously little light on his creative method. But it is clear that in this effort he drew his inspiration from the symphonic form of which he was a devoted student. Into the novel he weaves three themes. Each is given its major and minor variations which play upon each other with harmonic intricacy, producing crescendos of cumulative power. The motifs reveal their interrelationship with ever increasing lucidity so that in the end the work is discovered to be a hymn to earth and to man as protector, expander, and fulfiller of its destiny.

The first motif may be indentified by the word "Westerling". The compulsive movement of men and women across a sea and a continent, to establish a new society in a setting foreign to its origins but sympathetic to its need, is dramatized in the chronicles of two families, the Hamiltons out of Ireland and the Trasks out of Connecticut. They come together in the Salinas Valley, there to enact the scenes that are vital to Steinbeck's story of new creation, this time the

creation by man of his own world. This is, however, no usual family record of getting and spending, begetting and dying. The events are numerous, spectacular, often violent. They involve all the inevitable crises of conflict ranging from personal feud to war itself. But these concerns to individuals are offered as evidence that a far more significant story is in the process of unloading. Steinbeck defines westering as the impulse of the group to transform itself into "one great crawling beast"³⁵ compelled by the secrets of its nature to move through perils, survive disaster, and "get there." This is, in effect, an account in allegorical terms of the great yearning of man ever and again to reenact the drama of Genesis.

The second motif searches out the personal compulsions which in each underlie the urgent thrust of the will to servive. In each generation of the family of the Adam Trask the conflict of Cain and Abel is paralleled. This, Steinbeck suggests, is "the symbol story of the human soul" and he undertakes to explore the maze of hostilities through which each man must make his way in the inevitable struggle for dominance of brother over brother. The same fateful pattern of ambivalence is evident in the relationship of father and son. As steinback's spokesman observes: "The greatest terror a child can have is that he is not loved, and rejection is the hell he fears. I think everyone in the world to a large or small extent has felt rejections. And with rejection comes anger, and with anger some kind of crime in revenge for the rejection, and with the crime guilt."³⁶ Steinbeck's two visions of the passion of Everyman, dramatized in Adam Trask's struggle first with a violent brother and then with a difficult, demanding, sensitive son, play contrapuntally on each other until the significance of each phase is fully revealed. The "story of mankind" has been restaged, losing none of its

complexity, in the homely setting of the Trask household. The purpose of the author in doing so is, again in the words of his spokesman, to show how many "pains and insanities" could be "rooted out if the causes were known."³⁷

The third motif is also a familiar one but it is giving a new variation. What Steinbeck contributes to discussion of humanity's Problem one—the conflict between good and evil—is his own concept of the doctrine of free will. Again he refers to the biblical story recalling that the Lord, in the severity of his love, says to Cain: "If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well sin lieth at the door. And unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him."³⁸ Steinbeck became convinced that the King James version of the Bible erred in its translation of the significant word in this passage, the Hebrew verb "Timshel". His redefinition makes it a word not of command but of counsel: thou mayest, rather than thou shalt, rule over sin. One critic believes that Steinbeck ultimately reduces man's devoutness to animalism, that Steinbeck "presents man as a captive... of instincts and appetites only, blindly desiring and striving, not reasoning, judging, choosing but automatically responding to impulses and attractions",³⁹ Another, however, finds in *The Grapes of Wrath* "a contemporary adaptation of the Christ image" and indications of "some Christian meaning.",⁴⁰ Still others have seen various of Steinbeck's characters as pagans, pantheists, transcendentalists, and animals. The revealing fact in all this critical diversity is that the particular arguments hold up rather well; a roll-call of Steinbeck's characters would indeed muster an army of separate creeds. I contend that this very variety of religious direction in his characters constitutes one of the important thematic patterns in Steinbeck's novels.

Although there seems to be no single term to describe the phenomenon of each man creating his private religion to conform to the dictates of his nature, there is reason to believe that such a phenomenon must have existed since man first sought an answer to the mystery of his being. Arguing for the existence of a universal religious propensity, George Santayana wrote:

Even the heretics and atheists, if they have profundity, turn out after a while to be forerunners of some new orthodoxy. What they rebel against is a religion alien to their nature...but they yearn mightily in their own souls after the religious acceptance of a world interpreted in their own fashion.⁴¹

And again: "Religion is an interpretation of the world, honesty made, and made in view of man's happiness and its empirical conditions."⁴² Like Santayana, Steinbeck supposes that man is so constituted as to seek out a religion that suits his particular needs, and that if he finds none among those already existing, he creates his own.

Steinbeck does not attribute man's religious sensibility to a series of observable causes; he insists that reductive methods can not be used to explain the nature of the soul. Even when Jung affirms, in his theory of racial archetypes, that modern man's behaviour patterns are traceable to his earlier history (and, in fact, to his animal ancestry), he denies that his knowledge of heritage in any way unveils the mystery of the existence of man's individual and collective souls. We can, in other words, know only that man has always thought, felt and acted as he does now; we can know why. The "spontaneously" is particularly significant in the following judgment from Jung:

Man has, everywhere and always, spontaneously developed religious forms of expression, and...the human psyche from time immemorial has been shot through with religious feelings and ideas. Whoever can not see this aspect of the

human psyche is blind, and whoever chooses to explain it away, or to "enlighten" it away, has no sense of reality.⁴³

Steinbeck's view of man as religious being deals with the mind and with the soul of man and suggests a most-romantic-perhaps sentimental-approach to life. Conversely, his group-animal theory deals with man (in masse and individually) as a biological creature and seems to imply that Steinbeck's approach to life is calculating and impersonal, that he is unconcerned with man's spiritual self. But Steinbeck is first of all an artist, and if his awareness of man as an animal seems incongruous with his awareness of man's spirituality, both notions nevertheless have one important thing in common as Steinbeck employs them in his fiction: both work metaphorically to depict the artist's total vision of man's duality. For critical purpose each must be studied separately as idea, but as I shall show in the third of this three-pronged scheme, Steinbeck unites the two in a final moral and artistic resolutions.

In an essay designed to show that metaphor "develops out of social conditions and in turn influences social behavior," Weller Embler concluded in part that while our age has found its "master metaphor" in the machine, "it is apparent that our contemporary social similitudes are often drawn from the biological sciences."⁴⁴ Embler's observation suggests how true a vision for our time is Steinbeck's theory and metaphor of the group-animal. After alluding to Steinbeck's short story, "The Leader of the People," where westward-moving pioneers are "one big crawling beast," and wagons moving across the plains are "centipedes," Embler explains:

In Steinbeck's search for a social philosophy which could meet the problems of the day, he turned for assistance to the biological sciences. In these he found

sound method, tested hypothesis, and, if it could be translated into language descriptive of human behavior, a body of us able information about subhuman life... And it became Steinbeck's habit to compare human beings with marine animals, with land animals, and with insects. It may be fairly said that Steinbeck's dramatic similarities between mice and men, between fish and men (Sea of Cortez), between centipedes and men, whether drawn from observation or embedded within the firm system of ecology, have changed the social thinking of many readers.⁴⁵

And to this may be added that Steinbeck's group-animal metaphor, unlike machine metaphors (which imply futility), manages to convey a sense of the animal's conscious movement (implying hope).

In Sea of Cortez Steinbeck elaborates on the kind of observations that led to his group man theory. Here he describes the activities of certain groups of primitive sea animals:

There are colonies of pelagic tunicates which have taken a shape like the finger of a glove. Each member of the colony is an individual animal, but the colony is another individual animal, not at all like the sum of its individuals. Some of its colonists, girdling the open end, have developed the ability, one against the other, of making a pulsing movement very like muscular action. Others of the colonists collect the food and distribute it, and the out side of the glove is hardened and protected against contact. Here are two animals, and yet the same thing...so a man of individualistic reason, if he must ask, "which is the animal, the colony or the individual?" must abandon his particular kind of reason and say, "why, it's two animals and they aren't alike anymore than the cells of my body are like me. I am much more than the sum of my cells and, for all I know, they are much more than the division of me."⁴⁶

The first sentence of the individualistic reasoner's answer to his own question is very like a statement of Doc Burton's in In Dubious Battle. So not the human

being, but the tunicate or sea whip or sponge serves as model for the human group organism. Steinbeck was later to say in *The Pearl* that "a town is a thing like a colonial animal":⁴⁷

The precise biologist may point out that human groups hardly fit the glass of aggregation in which Allee puts tunicates, since the individual animals of the colony are contiguous. But to Steinbeck, as to Herbert Spencer, contiguity of parts matters little: he sees the same phenomenon in schools of fish, where the individuals are not in mutual contact, In speaking of the schools, he extends the conception from organized groups to whole species, to ecological communities, to all life :

The schools swam, marshaled and patrolled. They turned as a unit and dived as a unit. In there millions they followed a pattern minute as to direction and depth and speed. There must be some fallacy in our thinking of these fish as individuals, Their functions in the school are in some as yet unknown way as controlled as through the school were not unit. We can not conceive of this intricacy until we are able to think of the school as an animal itself, reacting with all its cells to stimuli which perhaps might not influence one fish at all, And this larger animal, the school, seems to have a nature and drive and ends of its own. It is more than and different from the sum of its units...In the little way of San Carlos, where there were many schools of a number of species...[we perceived] a larger unit which was the interrelation of species with their interdependence for food, even though that food be each other. A smoothly working larger animal surviving within itself larvel shrimp to little fish to larger fish to giant fish-one operating mechanism and perhaps this unit of survival may key into the larger animal which is the life of all the sea, and this into the larger of the world.⁴⁸

And so the state or national society as a single animal is but an organ of a larger single animal, the human species, and that in turn is an organ of the single animal, which is the biosphere. And that is not at all; the whole is single organism:

...species are only commas in sentence,...each species is at once the point and the base of a pyramid ... And then not only the meaning but the feeling about species grows mystery. One merges into another, groups melt into ecological groups until the time when what we know as life meets and enters what we think of as non-life: barnacle and rock and earth, earth and tree, tree and rain and air. And the units nestle into the whole and are inseparable from it.⁴⁹

Here is the oversoul (to which Steinbeck alludes in the "Easter sermon"), and here is the great chain of being. Steinbeck's statement is near to Leibniz':

Thus men are linked with the animals, these with the plants and these with the fossils, which in turn merge with those bodies which our senses and our imagination represent to us as absolutely inanimate ... it is necessary that all the orders of natural beings form but a single chain, in which the various classes, like so many rings, are so closely linked one to another that it is impossible for the senses or the imagination to determine precisely the point at which one ends and the next begins-all the species which, so to say, lie near to or up on the borderlands being equivocal, and endowed with characters which might equally well be assigned to either of the neighboring species. (Lovejoy's translation.)⁵⁰

Steinbeck is certainly Leibnizian when he says that life "is a unified field of reality" in which "everything is an index of everything else." The "feeling we call religious," says Steinbeck, is "The attempt to say that man is related to the whole thing."⁵¹

In these higher pantheistic and panpsychic reaches we leave biology behind. Although his biological studies of animal aggregations shaped Steinbeck's organismic theory of the human group, biological science does not really support

it; that is, all the evidence that he adduces can be, and is, explained otherwise. Steinbeck himself designates all such speculation as "It might be so." Since in To a God Unknown he had already stated through Joseph Wayne the central idea expressed in the foregoing quotation, it is probable that his belief in the unity of all being was prior to his formulation of the group-organism theory as a special application of it. It may be that his reading of Emerson and Emerson's Romantic predecessors first turned his mind in this direction. For the organic view of the world is a distinctive and fundamental feature of Romantic thought. The Romantics, revolting against mechanistic and formistic ideas, turned to the world of living things for a cosmic pattern. They likened the world to a living animal or plant, as Morse Peckham has shown: "[The metaphor] is a tree, for example, and tree is a good example," being an image that they used often. The interrelation of a tree's component parts is that "of leaves to stem to trunk to root to earth. Entities are an organic part of that which produced them. The existence of each part is made possible only by the existence of every other part."⁵² Steinbeck has much in common with the Romantics. He is usually classed as a realist or naturalist, but these are mere labels, and they hardly suit To A God Unknown and Tortilla Flat. Moreover, Irving Babbitt the anti-Romantic and Jacques Barzun the pro-Romance agree on one thing, that realism springs from Romanticism. But in a deeper sense than that Steinbeck is an heir of the Romantic movement. The organic view of the world renews primitive animism at a more sophisticated level. To the animist, sky and earth, wind and storm, tree and rock are living entities. Out of animism springs myth, and so Steinbeck's biological interpretation and his

mythical interpretation of the human condition flow from one and the same source.

In his discourse on the schools Steinbeck recurs to the idea expressed in In Dubious Battle that an individual may be a special organ of the group animal:

...we suspect that when the school is studied as an animal..., it will be found that certain units are assigned special functions to perform; that weaker or slower units may even take their places as placating food for the predator for the sake of the security of the school as an animal...There would seem to be only one commandment for living things: Survive! And the forms and species and units and groups are armed for survival, fanged for survival, timid for it, fierce for it, clear for it, poisonous for it, intelligent for it. This commandment decrees the death and destruction of myriads of individuals for the survival of the whole.⁵³

One function of the individual unit, then, is to die for the good of the whole. Here and elsewhere Steinbeck asserts that the relation of predator to prey is mutually beneficial: in Norway, it seems, the hawks were doing the willow grouse a good turn by preying on them, killing those slow-moving grouse infected with a parasitic disease and thus preventing the spread of the disease to healthy birds. This leads to the conclusion, and Steinbeck does not hesitate to draw it, that no individual's death matters at all, since it is necessary for the survival of the species; the commandment "Survive" is directed to the collective beings. For "to the whole, there is no waste. The great organism, Life, takes it all and uses it all....Nothing is wasted; 'no star is lost.'" Even human sacrifice can be rationalized:

Something one has a feeling of fullness, of warm wholeness, wherein every sight and object and ordor and experience to seem to key into a gigantic whole...Perhaps among primitive people the human sacrifice has the same effect

of creating a wholeness of sense and emotion—the good and bad, beautiful, ugly, and cruel all welded into one thing. Perhaps a whole man needs this balance.⁵⁴

Thus natural selection and sacrament have the same meaning, and magic is truly the forerunner of science. The sacrifices of Joseph Wayne, Jim Nolan, and Jim Casy express as-one-meant with the universe.

Stanley Hyman and other critics have seen a change in Steinbeck's social thinking from a kind of agrarian socialism in *The Grapes of Wrath* to an antisocial individualism in *Sea of Cortez*, in which he expresses a social Darwinism which Herbert Spencer would have heartily approved. He makes such statements as that a reservoir of unemployed is inevitable; that war is a diagnostic trait of human of beings; that pain, sorrow, disease, hunger, are necessary conditioning factors, to keep us tough and prevent our becoming an easy prey to the stronger; that hope is illusory, a diagnostic trait useful only as a "therapeutic poultice" or shock-absorber, and the principal source of "iron teleologies." Again, man's present mutation, says Steinbeck, appears to be in the direction of greater collectivism and "there is no reason to suppose... [that this mutation] is for the better." For a collective state, like that of the Incas, becomes soft and corrupt: the aggressive, warlike Spaniards destroyed the Inca empire. Steinbeck may hedge a bit with an "It might be so" or a "viewing-point man" but this revised Spencerism is apparently the view which he accepts in *Sea of Cortez* as something like "the whole picture."⁵⁵

There is really no change in his views, for such convictions as these were expressed in his novels of the thirties. For example, Doc Burton of *In Dubious Battle* saw labor troubles, unemployment, and wars as afflictions and drives of the group animal. Doc Burton is Ed Ricketts, and his doctrine dominates *Sea of*

Cortez: "When it seems that men, may be kinder to men, that wars may not come again, we completely ignore the record of our species."⁵⁶ In 1940 men were engaged in a war that nobody wanted (not even Hitler, it seems), says Steinbeck, and yet they had it, "a zombie war of sleep-walkers which nevertheless goes on out of all control of intelligence." As Doc Burton said, individual men formulate reasons and purposes for going to war, but the group animal merely wants war, and there is nothing that individual men can do about it. So these non-teleologists, telling us to look at the whole picture, to see what actually "is," direct us to the behavior of group organisms which are all part of the one world organism. We might suppose that we should study economic conditions, historical backgrounds, governmental policies, in order to arrive at the whole picture. But no, we must not "place the blame for killing and destroying on economic insecurity, on inequality, on injustice,..."⁵⁷ In a somewhat dubious fashion, studying socio-economic conditions of war has become blaming them, and the living actions, decisions, oppressions, become three abstractions that can be dismissed at once. One begins to suspect that "the whole picture" is preconceived.

Steinbeck's non-teleological speculations are the foundation of his social Darwinism, organismic theory, and chain of being (the last in striking agreement with Leibniz, whose philosophy is thoroughly teleological). These are uneasy bedfellows, since social Darwinism favors aggression, go-getting, business success, heaping up of riches; whereas the organismic and panpsychic ideas look toward cooperation, harmony, and the family virtues ---there are reprehensible groups, but, like bad individuals, they are out of tune. Hence Steinbeck finds an ethical paradox, to which he recurs in Cannery Row: that though we profess love

"of wisdom, tolerance, kindness, generosity, humility", and hate "of cruelty, greed, self-interest, graspingness, and rapacity," yet the approved "good qualities are invariable concomitants of failure, while the bad ones are the cornerstones of success." Men, he continues, secretly admire the bad qualities which bring success and riches, and though they regard Jesus, Augustine, and Socrates with love, they "would rather be successful than good." So if a biologist objectively observed these phenomena in another species, he "would replace the term 'good' with 'weak survival quotient' and the term 'bad' with 'strong survival quotient.'" Here Steinbeck puts his finger on a conflict of moralities in our civilization, but he has lapsed into the social-Darwinistic equation of survival with success in economy competition (and overlooked the present reality, that competition no longer accurately describes the economic), which means the acquisition of that property and wealth which cut one off from the "we." Nevertheless, all the heroes of his novels for a decade illustrated the good qualities of friendliness, generosity, humility (though not always honesty): his *paisanos* are healthy when they have nothing to do with the values of property and business success and go into decline as soon as they acquire property. His point had been that these values did not matter and that no real success was won in realizing them. So he appears to express inconsistent views about viable qualities: the ruthless wealth-seeker has a "strong survival quotient," and the poor but honest man has a healthier and more satisfactory way of life. Steinbeck attempts to reconcile these views by pointing to a "routine of changing domination." The successful rich become soft in security and are replaced by men who had become strong in adversity; then the new dominates become soft in their turn. In *The Grapes of Wrath*, Ma Joad told Tom

that hardships make the people tough: "Rich fellas come up an' they die, an' their kids ain't no good, an' they die out. But, Tom, we keep a-comin'."⁵⁸ And in interchapters of that novel Steinbeck shows that property and too great security have corrupted the owners, making them soft or dehumanizing them, whereas the pickers gain strength in adversity. But the point of the dominance-cycle theory is that success, survival, is gained through the bad qualities which are its concomitants. That is, the unsuccessful good men, toughened by hardships, adopt the bad aggressive qualities and win. The Joads, however, moved in precisely the opposite direction, towards greater friendliness and generosity; for their contingent success lay in the direction of greater cooperation and union with other men. The truth is that Steinbeck (and Ricketts) did not think the question through. With his natural selection in human affairs and his group organism he had stopped with Herbert Spencer, who died in 1903.

Steinbeck's "agrarian socialism" is really Chestertonian Distributivism, a society of small-scale farmers working their own plots. First, the men who want land must be given some; second, the present owners must realize this or go under. In The Grapes of Wrath Steinbeck lectures the owners: "If you who own the things people must have could understand this, you might preserve yourself.... For the quality of owing freezes you forever into 'I', and cuts you off forever from the 'we'." That is, they do not recognize their human and cosmic identity, are no longer in harmony with nature, and are therefore vulnerable. Aroused by the migrants' problems, Steinbeck expressed his characteristic views in social terms and envisaged a cooperative society based on small landholdings. Despite this, the vision was fitful; In Dubious Battle and The Grapes of Wrath waver between

optimism and doubt end without coming to a conclusion. Shortly afterwards in the Gulf of California, as Steinbeck repeatedly tells us, world and national affairs become remote. A world war was going on, and the collecting party hardly gave it a thought.

With Chesterton I believe that the most important thing about a man is his view of the world, and when we know Steinbeck's philosophy the meaning of his novels becomes clearer. And since it is an inadequate philosophy for a novelist, the central theses of his novels are not likely to carry complete conviction, whatever his narrative and poetic skill. Here is the big fault. Great as Steinbeck's novels of the thirties are, and they are truly great, they fall short of eminence, simply because Steinbeck lacked a genuine theory of society; for the group organism will not do. He was constantly trying to put man in relation to the universe instead of his fellows, like the Akkadian mythmaker who started from creation in order to define toothache's place in the world. One might almost say that Steinbeck's characters do not have social relations; certainly they do not have them as do the characters of Henry James, Dickens, George Eliot, Stendhal, or Faulkner.

One can learn something about marine zoology from Steinbeck's Log as well as from Rickett's phyletic catalogue. The book is a contribution to zoological science both valuable and useful. A pleasant feature is Steinbeck's evident love of the work that he was doing and admiration for the creatures that he observed and collected.

Steinbeck's another non fiction Bombs Away (1942), like The Grapes of Wrath, has plot, and the excerpts from the government publications paralleled the

interchapters from Grapes , In both books, the main characters show their mettle by surviving and learning from their initiatory experiences. If Steinbeck's bout of depression that occurred in 1942 can be directly traced to this book , as his letters seem to indicate, then it is possible that it was precipitated by his decision to write in the fiction format that he was familiar with instead of using the techniques of the journalist.

It is fitting that the theme that branded him as a propagandist in the eyes of some readers in The Grapes of Wrath –his concept of group-man is the focus of Bombs Away. This concept springs from Steinbeck's conviction, voiced by Jim Casy in The Grapes of Wrath, that all men and woman are “a little piece of a great big soul.”⁵⁹ While this theme attracted quite a bit of attention in The Grapes of Wrath, it actually permeates many of his works , Rama in To A God Unknown declares that a man “is not a man , unless he is all men.”⁶⁰ The term “group- man” was first used by Doc in In Dubious Battle, who tells Mac, “You might be an expression of a group–man, a cell endowed with a special function, like an eye-cell drawing your force from group–man.”⁶¹ In The Red Pony, Grandfather describes that westward movement of the pioneers as “a whole bunch of people made into one big crawling beast.”⁶²

Of course the idea of group–man is also fundamental to the military, which attempts to play down individualism so that men can learn to function as a unit. In Bombs Away, Steinbeck describes the process by which a group of unruly boys is transformed into a unit of fighting men. Although this process is a complicated one, consisting of a plethora of examinations and drills, Steinbeck insists that Americans take easily to this kind of indoctrination because teamwork is a

hallowed American tradition: "From the time of their being able to walk, our boys and girls take part in team playing. From one ol' cat to basketball, sand-lot baseball, to football, American boys learn instinctively to react as members of a team."⁶³ By the end of Bombing school, the inductee has learned to enjoy conformity: "At first he had disliked the formation, but as he became precise in his step and carriage he grew to like them...He discovered something he had not learned, which the directionless depression had not permitted him to learn-the simple truth that concerted action of a group of men produces a good feeling in all of them."⁶⁴

Bombs Away no doubt served its purpose well. It was "intended to be read by the mothers and fathers of the prospective Air Force men, to the end that they will have some idea of the training their sons have undertaken."⁶⁵ But the mothers and fathers wanted more than a report on the technical features of their sons' training. They wanted the illusion sustained that all was right with the war and with their sons' participation in it. They wanted their war sugarcoated, and Steinbeck, was willing to let them have it their way. It was not wrong that Steinbeck should have written a book for the Air force; it is only unfortunate that in doing so he intruded so flagrantly upon his own ethical and esthetic standards.

In The Grapes of Wrath, Steinbeck tried to protect himself from charges of being a communist by presenting the problems he was concerned with in terms of the way they affected the Joads, thereby forcing his readers to consider the effects of these social injustices on an individual family. In Bombs Away, however, Steinbeck showcases the theme a common interest at the expense of the individual personalities of the inductees, who soon blur into a bland, generic flight crew.

Even though Steinbeck's theme of group-man is just as strongly felt in *Bombs Away* as it is in some of Steinbeck's novels, his attitude toward organized groups of men does a complete "about face" in *Bombs Away*. In *The Grapes of Wrath*, Steinbeck criticized the four organized methods of solving problems: "organized charity, organized religion, organized government, and organized private enterprise."⁶⁶ While it is true that the Okies do organize themselves into a small group under the leadership of Jim Casy, this group is actually closer to what Kennedy refers to as a kind of "Primal collectivism"⁶⁷ consisting of a gathering of ragged men who have voluntarily come together and who do not require a rigid chain of command of fixed rules to regulate themselves. In *Bombs Away* Steinbeck's disdain for organization surfaces to a slight extent in his assertion that the Air Force is "different" from other military organizations: "it must delegate its authority to the ground crew mechanic who is as responsible for the flight of a plane as the pilot." Despite the flight crew's veneer of democracy, the fact remains that the Air Force is basically a type of superimposed collectivism, the likes of which Steinbeck rejected whole heartedly in *The Grapes of Wrath*. Moreover, the purpose of the "organization" in *Bombs Away* has changed, instead of fostering life as the informal groups of men in *The Grapes of Wrath* do, the primary mission of the Air Force is to crush life. The absence abroad the bomber of a "Ma" figure, who is the very epitome of love in *The Grapes of Wrath*, is a very telling omission. In *Bombs Away*, on the other hand, the characters are flat and lifeless. They are heavily documented types, not living, breathing people. This lack of credibility in these characters can be attributed in part to the emphasis he places on the group: "The Air Force is much more a collaboration than a

command,”⁶⁸ In other words, the sum total of the “parts” of the crew is much more important than the individual “parts”

In the summer and Fall of 1943, John Steinbeck went to war as a correspondent of the New York Herald Tribune, writing dispatches from England, North Africa, and the Mediterranean. In 1958, these dispatches were collected and published under the title of *Once There Was a War*, a volume which, since its publication, has been one of Steinbeck’s least read and least critically appreciated works, noted briefly as passing or left to discreet by most critics. In his praise of this book, Marovitz suggests that “*Once There Was a War* can and should be read as a unified work rather than simply as a series of ephemeral human interest articles.”⁶⁹ He points out that the book is unified by theme, setting, and character. “the theme” he states, “is man’s struggle for survival; the setting is the war zone; the characters are the civilians and servicemen existing under combat conditions.”⁷⁰ Most importantly, however, Marovitz points out the “remarkable unity established through the consistent use of dream imagery.”⁷¹

Though Marovitz’s discussion of dream imagery suggests convincingly that there is an understanding unity to be found in this book, it serves the even more important purpose of pointing us in the direction of a still more comprehensive structural unity than simply that of dream imagery or of setting, characters, and theme. For, if we look closely at the overall imagery running throughout the dispatches, with special attention to the opening pieces, the structure of what Joseph Campbell has termed the “monomyth” begins to assert itself.

Steinbeck's other non-fiction, America and Americans (1966) is described as a book in text and pictures, of opinions unashamed and individual. The text is an informal commentary upon the emergence of something unique in the world : "America—complicated, paradoxical, bullheaded, shy, cruel, boisterous, unspeakably clear, and very beautiful."⁷² The pictures, taken by forty of the best photographers in America, supplement the opinions of the text and brilliantly support Steinbeck's faith in the uniqueness of American life. Many of them capture the special freshness of youth and the vital restlessness of adulthood that Steinbeck sees in the Americans. Others reveal the group phenomenon in America of shared feeling or purpose whether the group is united by joy or sorrow. America and Americans, then is a picture book commentary on American life which has its own individuality and purpose in Steinbeck's special understanding of America and the graphic illustrations which enrich those in sights.

Two other Steinbeck's works of non-fiction, Sea of Cortez (1941) and Travels with Charley in Search of America (1962), offer important insights into Steinbeck's opinions and sense of direction in America and Americans. In Sea of Cortez, Steinbeck openly states his biological theory of man and society which informs his fiction and lies at the heart of America and Americans. His belief that the human group, as in the animal world, functions as a single organism provides the basis for his view that Americans, despite their vast differences, are a unified and individual body. Each American functions individually, but his primary purpose for existence is the renewal and perpetuation of the whole. Only when the group or body loses its sense of purpose or its capacity to adapt to change is its existence placed in jeopardy. In this sense, America and Americans represents

Steinbeck's examination of American life for evidence of the movement and adaptability which are necessary for survival even if that search may uncover the stagnation and entropy that means certain death for the organism.

The meanings of America and Americans lies in Steinbeck's selection and interpretation of the myths of American life. As the priest-exorcist, he celebrates the myths and rituals of American life which he holds in reverence as he summons forth the evils that have perverted the myths and have driven Americans to commit crimes against their neighbors and the land. In some respects, he is also the old man, the leader of the people, who draws upon all his wisdom and experience to examine the beliefs of America and warn the people against an approaching disaster by laying out before them the essential values which shaped the country and are now being abused. He can turn a stern Calvinistic eye on Americans and see the behavior which paves the way to an inevitable doom, but he can also be completely Emersonian in his own belief in the central possibilities which still exist in America.

Steinbeck establishes the relevance of myth on both an organic and historic level. His organic view of man and society suggests the sort of primitive animism from which spring the beginnings of mythology. J.G. Frazer's The Golden Bough and Jessie Weston's From Ritual to Romance, books known by Steinbeck, trace many of the beliefs and rituals still celebrated in modern times to ancient vegetation myths vitally connected with the cyclical patterns of nature. Steinbeck also supports his interest in myth with an idea that resembles C.G. Jung's collective unconscious. He believes that the American dream like all dreams, is

formed from powerful memories of real events which may be part of an individual's life or part of his merger in the historical pattern:

The national dream of Americans is a whole pattern of thinking and feeling and may well be a historic memory surprisingly little distorted. Furthermore the participants in the dream need not have descended physically from the people to whom the reality happened. This pattern of thought and conduct which is the national character is absorbed even by the children of immigrants themselves, no matter how they may wish it; birth on American soil seems to be required.⁷³

Steinbeck locates one of the central myths of American life in our belief that all men are created equal. He offers his version of American history, shaped by individual efforts and group unity, as support for the validity of the myth. The settlement of the country, according to Steinbeck, came about through an individual determination to overcome a strange and hostile wilderness. Yet, despite the reality that every single man was out for himself, that individual groups sought only self-preservation, a unity was achieved. Steinbeck strongly suggests that the process, contrary to the original purpose behind the exploration and settlement of America, was nevertheless an organic one, formed by the strong individual and group instinct for survival and the natural adaptability of one part of an environment or body to another.

The perversion of the myths of equality had already begun before the myth, itself, was formalized into an accepted belief. The instinct for survival banded groups together, but once a minority merged with the majority, it hastened to add its particular ferocity to the drive to exclude other groups from the main body. Other myths were often formed to preserve the sanctity and separateness of the group from outsiders. The central mythic pattern of arrival, prejudice, acceptance,

and absorption failed in meaning particularly for two racial groups: the Indian and the Black. The substitute myths created to deal with them were destructive rather than hopeful in nature. After a brief attempt to bargain with the American Indian for what was rightfully his possession, it became convenient for the early settlers who wanted the land to convince themselves that the Indian was sub-human. It viewed from within the traditional beliefs that many settlers brought with them from Europe, the Indian was regarded as the devil's agent. The less orthodox regarded him as a savage dangerous animal. Once it became obvious that the Indian, even though defeated, would survive the attempts to destroy his race, the new owners of the land shifted the ostensible purpose of the myth and treated Indian as a child, "incapable of learning and of taking care of himself."⁷⁴ The perverse myth of the dangerous animal was replaced by the equally perverse myth of the dumb animal.

Steinbeck finds a dual myth behind the exclusion of the Black from American society. The Southerner, who needed the labor of the black man and feared his physical strength, found security in the belief that his slave "was a lazy, stupid animal, who was also dangerous, clever, tricky, thievish, and lecherous."⁷⁵ The Northerner, who knew about the condition of slavery primarily through self-righteous sermons, travelers' stories, and emotionally sensational novels, found it morally comfortable to believe that the Black

was a mistreated brutalized, overworked, and starved creatures, sometimes a hero, sometimes a saint but never, by any chance, a man like other men.⁷⁶

After the Civil War, the dual myth altered on the surface, but it remained the sham in essence. The southerner turned for protection to local laws and tactics of terror to control the Black, who was now more dangerous than lazy or stupid. The

Northerner, now forced to accept his Black brother, discovered that he, too, could only accept him on the same level as the Southerner had. Unable to use questionable means or secret terror because of his moral position, the Northerner found that he could exclude the Black by forcing him into a new form of slavery: "The servitudes of debt, of need, of ignorance, and the constant reminders of inferiority."⁷⁷

The unwillingness to merge the Black into the American experience reveals another paradox of the American character. On one level, the act is perversion of the myth of equality which lies at the foundation of American beliefs and aspirations. Self-interest and self-preservation are as much behind the idea of separate-but-equal as they were behind the idea of slavery. On another level, the myth that have been created to deny equality to certain racial groups offer a perverse recognition of their individuality. What is twisted in that recognition is the failure to accept the Black other than he fits the stereotype of racist myths. Steinbeck's point is that Americans "will not have overcome the trauma that slavery has left on our society, North and South, until we can not remember whether the man we just spoke to in the street was Negro or white."⁷⁸

The attempt to deny individuality except on the basis of racial identity involves exclusion from another myth which Steinbeck feels is as critical to the American character as the myth of equality. He regards the American's belief in his self-reliance as the other critical factor in the formation of the American character. The myth of equality was primarily a creation of the 18th century and the writings of Thomas Paine, Thomas Jefferson, and Benjamin Franklin; the idea of self-reliance, however, was formed in the 19th century by the pioneer

movement, and given mythic significance in the writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, and other transcendental philosophers. This belief allows the American to think of himself as uniquely independent and restlessly mobile. He sees his home as a symbol of security and comfort rather than a symbol of wealth and social position. He envisions himself as a great hunter or an adventuresome traveler, and no matter what his personal circumstances, still holds to the belief that America is the best of all possible worlds and that all possibilities remain open to each individual.

The myth of equality, once perverted, divides America and disturbs its natural unity. Steinbeck, however, feels that the perversion and potential loss of the myth of self-reliance is even more destructive to the American character. Any danger to the American's belief is self-reliance which threatens the vital spirit of the people. Spiritual maladies, such as what Steinbeck calls paedosis, the desire of parents to see their frustrated dreams fulfilled in the lives of their children, corrupt the American character and insure a lifeless future dominated by feelings of fear and guilt. Advertising groups, calculating the situation, exploit the parents' fears, using the children as a market for food, clothes, and various cosmetics, and further insure a future of alienation and spiritual emptiness. The new leader of the people is the Corporation Man. He represents all the negative characteristics which define the age in which he lives. His whole being, his work, his family, and his future, is shaped by his fear and admiration of the corporation. His life style, revered by so many factions of American life, is a tribute to the corporate status. The single driving force in his life is to conform to those patterns and ideas which will insure success for the corporation, and to convince others to conform by their simple

allegiance to the corporation's products. The values of freedom and self-reliance are shunned and replaced by one definite goal-to make money for the corporate god.

Relating the activity to humanity behaviour, Steinbeck maintains that the phenomenon must be regarded as a "mystery" in much the same sense as the early Church called something a mystery because it was not accessible to reason and simply had to be accepted "fully and deeply as so" therefore,

a man of individualistic reason, if we must ask, "which is the animal, the colony or the individual?" must abandon his particular kind of reason and say, "why, it is two animals and they aren't alike any more than the cells of my body are like me. I am much more than the sum of my cells and, for all I know, they are much more than the division of me." There is no quietism in such acceptance, but rather the basis for a far deeper understanding of us and out world.⁷⁹

Later in Sea of Cortez, referring to school of fish, Steinbeck reinforces this idea of the group having a special function:

And this larger animal, the school, seems to have a nature and drive and ends of its own....directed by a school intelligence....We suspect that when the school is studied as an animal rather than as a sum of unit fish, it will be found that certain units are assigned special function to perform; that weaker or slower units may even take their place as placating food for the predator for the sake of the security of the school as an animal.⁸⁰

We shall later see how Steinbeck consistently converts these ideas into analogies in his novels, but we need only to remember the role played by the grandfather in "The Leader of People" to understand the relative importance and special function of units within the group. Without grandfather, the leader, there would have been no direction, no intelligent movement for the "crawling beast." The thing had to have a head, says Grandfather. And it also had to have men of skill-the gloved,

muscular "hands" of Steinbeck's colony of sea animals. In "The Leader of the People" Billy Buck's grandfather, the mule driver, is the man of skill who keeps the group in condition while the leader directs its moments. *In The Grapes of Wrath*, Ma Joad heads the family group while Al keeps the old truck in repair; and in *In Dubious Battle*, Mac the Communist organizer is the "boss" who shows the worker, London, how to manipulate the strikers into a united force.

Curiously, none of these "units" within the group is Steinbeck's ultimate hero. We may love and respect Ma Joad, but she is bewildered, even in her persistent hope, by events she can not control; we may admire Grandfather for having been a leader of people, but most of all we pity him for his lost strength; we may marvel at Mac's devotion to his cause and at his power, but we despise his brutal means to dubious ends. Always in Steinbeck's novels however, is another figure who looms outside and above the groups. Viewing the group with detached compassion is always Steinbeck's prototypical biologist-philosopher. As a biologist he observes the "animal" with scientific objectivity, hoping to discover in its behaviour an order and a meaning, within an ecological framework. As philosopher, still concerned with order and meaning, but knowing that objective reality is only part of the truth, he frees himself of conventional scientific restrictions and allows himself the luxury of subjectivity; he views the groups as men who, like himself, are spiritual beings seeking their place within a mysteriously ordered cosmos. But this hero is a character in his own right, and as a character he is loved, respected, feared, and misunderstood by the others. He is loved because he gives solace to the weak; he is respected because he lends himself to the causes of the group and helps to keep it alive; he is feared and

misunderstood because he remains the outsider who never seems to wholly believe in the mundane causes of the group, and because his attitudes and methods transcend the group's understanding. Like the "good men most biologists are" Steinbeck writes in Sea of Cortez, he is "temperamental, moody, lecherous, loud-laughing, and healthy." But he also, as scientist, observes life, and he, "learns something from it."⁸¹

It is clear from the works of Steinbeck that he did not confine himself to the study of human being only. He looked upon humanity as an inseparable part of the whole cosmos in which a particle of desert sand, a lonely wandering dog, a neglected cat, a limpish rat, a lone tree or a flower, a leaping or a dead horse black and cold rock, a crayfish, a star-fish or a water snake had an important role to play. The life-force connects all forms of life on earth. This fact explains the abundant use of animal imagery in his novels. He was deeply aware of the behavior of several types of organism from the domestic poultry to scaled reptiles, insects, fish of different varieties, crabs, snails, turtles, cats, dogs, and even the common rats. He could never forget, it appears, while describing certain characters in his novels that they were no more than mere animals. So we find that their responses to changing situations have always a parallel with animal behaviour. They are like the animals even in their motives. Tom, in the beginning of The Grapes of Wrath, is very close in behavior and motives to an animal. He is hardly bothered by moral considerations and leads a life dictated mostly by instincts. The same is true of Lennie in Of Mice and Men. Infact, in this novel there is a repetitive and recurrent use of animal images and references. In The Grapes of Wrath, there is "an isolated snail crawling painfully along the jungle

soil", a land turtle dragging along its high domed shell over the grass and a stray dog crossing the road and dying when run over by the Jelopy of the Joads. In Cannery Row, he highlights the behavior of frogs. In Of Mice and Men, George compares himself and Lennie to animals 'pounding their tail on some ranch.' Robert Spiller rightly suggests that "his study of the friendship of the Lumpish Lennie and youthful George is believable as a revelation of a warped personality at the same time that is symbolic of man's eternal longing to return to the land" and that Steinbeck saw "animal motivation underlying human conduct."⁸²

In The Pearl Steinbeck makes an extensive use of animal images, of dogs, wolf, fish and oyster. In Cannery Row he writes, "Our Father who art in nature, who has given the gift of survival to the coyote, the common brown rat, the English sparrow, the house-fly and the moth must have a great and overwhelming love....our father who art in nature."⁸³ In the same novel, to equate human and animal activities, he makes use of the images of wolves, strictured bulls and the tigers with ulcers. In Sweet Thursday he employs the images of snakes and octopi, and in East of Eden, the snake image is dominant. It is used to describe the inner and outer reality about Cathy. Besides the novels, his short stories are also replete with animal images-a snake swallowing white rats looked upon by a lady in the story. The Snake, a while quail and a cart in the story "The While quail", the degrading state of the hero is shown through a number of animal image in "The Flight", the image of mare giving birth to a young colt in the Red Pony symbolizing death, birth and sufferings. The animal imagery is not ornamental or decorative; it is mostly functional, at times assuming the function of symbolic arguments. But on the whole it contributes to Steinbeck's

understanding of and belief in biological naturalism which at times takes him to the point of disregard of moral implications of human behavior. In fact, it is his biological naturalism that helps him in transcending the conventional borders of fiction. His reach goes beyond the well-established and accepted norms of thematic art. He finds "our father" in nature, governing the world, but at the same time providing man with the opportunity of developing or contracting his consciousness. Human consciousness capable of working out man's salvation is an extra dimension, the dimension that animals lack. And in this difference lies the basic difference between man and animal, 'Timshall' is given to man and not to animals.

Steinbeck's vision is a realistic and naturalistic view of human life along with romantic strains, but it is positive vision where man has the final choice and man himself is the centre of the universe. Steinbeck's genius lies in extensive use of philosophy, theology, mythology, and symbolism to establish a world of reality; his tireless experimentation with varied subjects, themes and styles to give a total view of human life; his ability to grasp and portray man's journey on different planes-physical, mental, psychological and spiritual; his masterful weaving of endless observations of the intricacies of the world with his undying and unshakable faith in man's freedom and his spiritual strength. The various approaches to the problem of the individual man in society-romantic, naturalistic, existential, realistic-combine and blend in his works, and create a multi-coloured and multi-faceted world of human life on earth. By thus presenting the macrocosm of human life in the microcosm of American Society, he has

expanded the bounds of social realism, and given it an artistic perfection: this is his unique gift to fiction.

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CHAPTER 5

AMERICA AND AMERICANS.

John Steinbeck in his non-Fiction-*Travels with Charley*, looks for the American dreams, virtues and the glory of the pioneers among the moderns. This travelogue reflects his concerns for the morals, the disease of "an ethics," and a certain element of hate, in the lives of his country men. Although the travelogue deals with a journey he had undertaken in 1960, it actually marks the end of Steinbeck's journey as a writer, a journey which began far back in 1929 with *Cup of Gold*.

Steinbeck says on the fly page of *The Winter of Our Discontent* that the novel is "about a large part of America to-day." Similarly the subtitle of *Travels With Charley* tells us that the book is about a journey "in search of America." Concern for his country influences both the books. In *Travels With Charley*, Steinbeck writes :

I, an American writer, writing about America, was working from memory, and the memory is at best a faulty, warpy reservoir. I had not heard the speech of America, smelled the grass and trees and sewage, seen its hills and water, its color and quality of light... I had not felt the country for twenty-five years. In short, I was writing something I did not know about, and it seems to me that in a so called writer this is criminal.¹

Steinbeck turned away from his work on "a book about king Arthur and the Round Table, a legend that had fascinated him since childhood,"² to write a novel about the contemporary American civilization. In order to understand his country and the people, he undertook the journey of rediscovery of America.

Travels With Charley, like *Sea of Cortez* in the middle of his literary career, is Steinbeck's introspective study of men and materials for his recent fiction. Typical of Steinbeck's love of search, both the books are travels. *Sea of Cortez* was a voyage,

ostensibly to observe and collect marine specimens. But it turned out to be a speculative journey, sorting out ideas and stating the thesis of work to be done in the future. Similarly *Travels With Charley* is a Statement of Steinbeck's current literary interests. Beginning from New England, and passing through a great part of America, the journey ends in New England. What Steinbeck sees and hears could well be what he had all along suspected. For what he says in *Travels with Charley* regarding the average man's attitude to life is not different from what he implies in *The Winter of Our Discontent*. This fact, taken with his letter to Adlai Stevenson, makes it apparent that the journey is actually a review, a thinking aloud. If *Sea of Cortez* expressed certain views which influenced his writings of the Thirties, *Travels With Charley* brings Steinbeck's views up to date. It also shows that Steinbeck has come a long way from the biological point of view which was mainly concerned with the problems of survival. It was not an accident that *Sea of Cortez* was an expedition to observe marine life. Steinbeck's literary universe was the tide pool. But now in *Travels with Charley* the journey is a search for a thing lost. Steinbeck looks for the American dreams, the virtues and glories of the pioneers among the moderns, what he wants to find is sadly lacking. "My own journey started long before I left, and was over before I returned," he says in *Travels With Charley*.³ is very true. For he must have seen what he had anticipated. He knows that "external reality has a way of being not so external after all," and the mighty nation "turns out to be the macrocosm of microcosm me."⁴ If *Sea of Cortez* reflected Steinbeck's concern for the economic problems of the Depression, *Travels With Charley* reflects his concern for the morals,

the disease of "an-ethics," and a certain element of hate, in the lives of his countrymen.

Steinbeck is surprised to find the disease of "an-ethics" in his country, especially, as America had entered upon an era of plenty at the end of the Second World War (1939-1945). The hunger and unemployment of the Depression were hardly a memory. The things for which people strove in the past-plenty and prosperity-turned out to be a curse. And now Steinbeck is as much concerned for the man in times of plenty as he was for the man in the years of scarcity. It appears to Steinbeck that America is suffering from "too many THINGS." In his letter to Adlai Stevenson he speaks of

a creeping, all-pervading, never-gone of immorality which starts in the nursery and does not stop before it reaches the highest offices, both corporate and governmental...Then there's the violence, cruelty and a hypocrisy symptomatic of a people, which has too much..." Steinbeck concludes the letter, "Someone has to reinspect our system and that soon...On all levels it is rigged, Adlai.⁶

In his last book, America and Americans, Steinbeck expresses these and similar anxieties about his country and the people. In America and Americans, he writes a whole chapter deplored the death of morals in the country. "It is hard to criticise the people one loves" ⁷ he writes. Yet it is his love for his people which makes him pitilessly expose the national malady of "an-ethics":

It is a creeping, evil thing that is invading every cranny of our political, our economic, our spiritual and our psychic life. I begin to think that the evil thing is one thing, not many, that racial unrest, the emotional crazy guilt that drives our people

in panic to the couches of the psychoanalysts, the fallout, dropout, copout insurgency of our children and young people, the rush to stimulants, as well as hypnotic drugs, the rise of narrow, ugly, vengeful cults of all kinds, the distrust and revolt against all authority... and this in time of plenty such as has never been known.⁸

Steinbeck is surprised that plenty should bring out the worst in man. In times of inadequate food and security men observed codes of conduct and morals. Now the stock response is that a thing is all right if everybody does it. To start with, the hero of *The Winter of Our Discontent* is out of tune with the corrupt practices of New Baytown. But the creeping disease is so powerful that soon he succumbs to it. The all-pervading quality of the disease is best reflected in the attitude of Ethan's boy, Allen, who is already steeped in the public philosophy of the fast buck. When Ethan pulls up the boy for not rendering even lip service to morals he replies, "shucks, everybody does it."⁹ Allen is a contrast to Jody in *The Red Pony*. Both of them are about the same age. But whereas Jody learns the values of life from his mother, Allen has hardly anything to learn from his mother. Mary Hawley actually supports the son instead of attempting to educate him. It is so because Allen's rottenness stems from his very roots. His mother is no Ma Joad.

Steinbeck is not alone in his indictment of the contemporary lack of morals. When the editor of *The New Republic* invited four distinguished men to comment on Steinbeck's views on "our rigged morality" all of them endorsed his opinion.¹⁰ Among them, Harry Golden, made a special comment that Steinbeck was the only writer of long standing who was really concerned about America and that

Hemingway (1898-1961) and Faulkner (1897-1962) did not write about America. Steinbeck has always been anxious for the happiness of large communities-the migrants and the social outcastes in the Thirties, and now the whole nation. Golden wanted to treat Steinbeck's views not as clichés but as serious warnings.

Steinbeck warns that leisure, the gift of modern technology, is far from a blessing. People have more than they can eat; men and women retire early from work: the children grow without having a thing to do with their hands being unprepared for the leisure and comfort, the average American has become restless. Blind violence without anger behind it, a refusal to get involved instead of offering help are some of the consequences of this restlessness.

But Steinbeck has not given up hope that one day the very restlessness might lead the nation forward. As long as people are restless, even in a meaningless way, they are not dead: they will open to many larger experiences.

Racial hatred is another evil which makes Steinbeck unhappy. Only twice in all his stories has he made reference to this evil. Crooks, the Negro stable buck in Of Mice and Men, is a victim of segregation. The other Negro is the nameless one lynched by a white mob, in the story "The Vigilante." In his youth Steinbeck did not see much of the Negroes, and it was never his method to write about a thing he did not know first hand. The only Negro family he knew in California was the Coopers of Salinas. In boyhood he never "heard or felt a breath" of colour prejudice. He was not prepared for the things he later heard about the Negroes- that they were an inferior race, they were dirty and mean. Steinbeck always remembered how the

Coopers were intelligent and how Mrs. Cooper's kitchen was immaculate. In fact of his best nurses during the days of despair after he divorced his second wife was a Negro named Neale. Steinbeck described him as "a good man and will keep me fed and washed and clean..., and an excellent driver, cook, valet and damn good friend."¹¹ After his becoming a New Yorker, Steinbeck's views about the Negroes are more clearly seen: "I guess when they are drafting peace-makers they'd better pass me by." ¹² This does not mean that Steinbeck hates the Southern whites. With an insight that always helped him understand that the other side is also made of men like us, he traces the disease of racial hatred to the Emancipation.

Millions of slaves, blinking and helpless, emerged into the blinding light of freedom, and they were no more fitted or prepared for it than a man would be who after a life-time spent in prison was forced into the complication, the uncertainty, and the responsibility of the outside world....and the white Southerner found himself surrounded by a vengeful, savage and untrained enemy. ¹³

Many Southerners were tired of owing slaves even before the Civil War. But when they were called evil and brutal men by the Northerners, they began to defend slavery by way of defending themselves. The Northerners entertained the image of a Negro as an innocent and saintly hero suffering untold miseries. The Southerners built up a retaliatory image of the Negro. That was how the racial war was perpetuated. After the Emancipation the Negroes were free to go to the North, and they were forced by the South to do so. But when they actually went there the Northerners, who had fought for the emancipation of slaves, were not prepared to accept them as equals. They were free but, only to live in segregation.

In *Travels With Charley*, Steinbeck describes the horror he felt at the sight of Negro-baiting. The cheer-leaders of Texas boo and call unprintable names at a little Negro girl and a white man taking his son to the school.¹⁴ He also meets some sober men who can look at the thing as a whole. He meets an old man, who has two Negroes to take care of him. The old man wonders how the Negro would react to a change, when it takes place. The Negroes hate the whites just as the whites hate them. The old man agrees with Steinbeck that a time might come when the white will be outnumbered, or more likely both will disappear into a new race. Like the old man Steinbeck is bothered with what happens in the meantime. The young Negro student he speaks to, strongly feels that something should be done now. One day, may be, the Negroes will attain perfect equality. But Martin Luther King's passive resistance is, in his opinion, too slow to benefit the Negroes. When Steinbeck reminds him of Gandhi's nonviolent fight against violence, the young student replies, that what is urgent is action. "I might be an old man before I am a man at all. I might be dead before."¹⁵ Even in his vehemence the boy feels that he has been selfish. The younger generation of the Negroes dreams of complete equality in their own life time. And Steinbeck has sympathy for the impatience of youth. Some of the older Negroes, like the one Steinbeck picks up on the highway, have withdrawn into a protective shell and refuse to be drawn into a dispute. Steinbeck shares with them their anxieties and hopes.

In analyzing the Negro problem Steinbeck brings to bear the same impartiality he achieved in *In Dubious Battle*. To Steinbeck the U.S.A. is infected by the curse of

racial hatred. He hopes for a better day for all when the curse is removed; but in the mean time he is much worried regarding the means before ends are achieved. If he were to have written a book on Negro equality, "around which much of our thinking and our present-day attitudes turn,"¹⁶ he would, in all likelihood, have displeased both sides, just as in *In Dubious Battle* he displeased both the Communists and the Capitalists.

In the midst of racial hatred, in an atmosphere of "an-ethics," in the general gold-rush, and in the restlessness Steinbeck is able to see a oneness in his countrymen. His journey in search of America reveals to him that

we are a nation, a new breed. America are much more Americans than they are Northerners, Southerners, Westerners, or Easterners....It is a fact that Americans from all sections and of all racial extractions are more alike than the Welsh are like the English....The American identity is an exact and provable thing.¹⁷

In his foreword to *America and Americans*, Steinbeck observes "that out of the whole body of our past, out of our differences, our quarrels...something has emerged that is itself unique in the world: America...."¹⁸ The unity of the nation, Steinbeck claims, can be seen even in the physical features of Americans who resemble one another, whether they are of Japanese blood or of Caucasian origin.

Steinbeck seems to have discovered, in his old age, that he was in love with his country. Though not an expatriate like some writers of his youth, Steinbeck did not completely identify himself with the country during the Thirties. Perhaps his love of the region of his birth compensated for everything. Perhaps the unity of the states as one nation was still in the making. The Second World War (1939-1945) brought

all the people together as never before. The very restlessness of the people, their constant movement from place to place, large scale production of consumer goods cut through the borders to make a closer unit of the states. In his travels Steinbeck notices that "regional speech is in the process of disappearing"¹⁹ and thanks to the radio and television.

The oneness is not an unmixed blessing. The uniform cooking, clean but the tasteless food, comic books and broadcasting are not things that make a sensitive man happy. As a storekeeper in Minnesota tells Steinbeck, the pent up feelings of the nation burst into some excitement over a murder or the World series of baseball games. The best outlet for the American seems to be the Russian but the anti-Russian feelings are only symptoms of the disease of smugness. People are afraid to have opinions of their own. A friend and a political reporter had asked Steinbeck, before he commenced his travels, to look for a man with guts. He had bitterly remarked, "I haven't seen anything but cowardice and expediency. This used to be a nation of giants. Where have they gone? You can not defend a nation with a board of directors."²⁰ All that Steinbeck found in his travels was a fight or two over the ancient subject-a woman.

It is his love for his people that gives Steinbeck the privilege of making fun of their ways. In the chapter entitled "*Paradox and Dream*" in America and Americans, he makes endless fun of the so-called "American way of life" of which the Americans speak "as though it involved the ground rules for the governance of heaven."²¹ Steinbeck lists a series of paradoxes in the American belief in myths. The

average American believes that he is a born mechanic, a pioneer and a great hunter, but he is incapable of looking into the gas tank when the car fails, does not know how to kill and cook an animal, and shoots the whole neighborhood, except the target, when out on a hunting spree. He dreams of ideal home, but is found constantly changing places and often living in mobile homes. Steinbeck has sympathy for the dreams of Americans in spite of the many paradoxes involved in them.

These dreams describe our vague yearning toward what we wish were and hope we may be: wise, just, compassionate, and noble. The fact that we have this dream at all is perhaps an indication of its possibility.²²

Steinbeck "has no sacred cows."²³ He exposes the drawbacks in the American way of life, with all its evils such as racial hatred, "an-ethics," lack of growth of the mind. They are all laid bare with the frankness with which Steinbeck is always credited.²⁴ As he says in his foreword to *America and Americans*, his essay is "inspired by curiosity, impatience, some anger, and a passionate love for America and Americans."²⁵ He wants other countrymen to know "what our country is like to us, what we feel about it: our wonder at its size and diversity, and above all our passionate devotion to it—all of it, the land, the idea—and the mystique."²⁶

Love for his country and the people makes Steinbeck angry at their drawbacks. The wrath of Steinbeck of the Thirties arose out of a love for the migrant workers. The unhappy lot of the victims of the Depression (1929-1933), the social outcasts and those by nature handicapped to live a normal life moved him to write compassionately about their suffering. Man as an individual and as a member of the group in his struggle for survival is an object of pity for him. Using biological and

biblical metaphors, and the myths of Adam and king Arthur, Steinbeck expresses his compassion for man. Steinbeck's image of man after *East of Eden* is that he "is individual, responsible, guilty, redeemable",²⁷ and as such his compassion for man is based on the fall of man, his remorse and the promise of a better life. Steinbeck's love for his country and the people is more than ever strongly expressed in his later writings. And because America is the most powerful nation among the democratic countries, he thinks it is the last great hope for mankind. Seen in this light Steinbeck's concern for Americans becomes a concern for humanity itself:

At the heart of all Steinbeck's writings is man. Steinbeck is unhappy and angry at man's inhumanity to man. But he does not despair. He knows that it is a lack of understanding that others are also men like us that leads to violence and hatred. And he believes that the evil of violence and hatred can be cured by love and understanding. Steinbeck's "work drive has always been aimed at making people understand each other."²⁸ Now that man is equipped with a God-like power to destroy, Steinbeck is all the more concerned for man's well-being. "Man himself has become our greatest hazard and our only hope."²⁹ It is the duty of a writer, says Steinbeck, to discourage the hazardous tendency and to create hope by celebrating "man's proven capacity for greatness of heart and spirit—for gallantry in defeat—for courage, compassion and love."³⁰ Compassion and love—these are the key words to the understanding of Steinbeck's works. Instant acceptance of any kind of person, sympathy for the under-dog, understanding of the inarticulate and a love for all that lives—these are the main features of his fiction. Above all Steinbeck possesses what

Arnold Bennett calls the "essential characteristic of the 'really great novelist'" a Christ-like, all-embracing compassion,³¹

The Nobel Prize citation acclaimed John Steinbeck as an independent expounder of the truth with an unbiased instinct for what is genuinely American, be it good or wicked...He likes to contrast the simple joy of life with the brutal and cynical craving for money. But in him we find the American temperament also expressed in his great feeling for nature, for the tilled soil, the wasteland and the mountains and the ocean coasts.³²

In *America and Americans*, Steinbeck himself isolates this genuinely native element.

For I believe that out of the whole body of our past, out of our differences, our quarrels, our many interests and directions, something has emerged that is itself unique in the world; America-complicated, paradoxical, bullheaded, shy, cruel, boisterous, unspeakable dear, and very beautiful.³³

The essential Americanness of Steinbeck is basic to an understanding of his art. It is also important in isolating his image of man. Through his novels, he delineates the American man, who is variously described as optimistic, pragmatic, outgoing, gregarious, energetic and moral. His portraits have relevance for the rest of the world also because man everywhere has certain common drives and aspirations. Unlike the repatriate writers, Steinbeck rooted himself in American soil and heritage, and imaged man. And this image has its share of universal validity. What Camus claimed about Silone is true in the case of Steinbeck.

As to Silone, who speaks to the whole of Europe, the reason why I feel myself so close to him is that he is at the same time so incredibly rooted in his national and even provincial tradition.³⁴

In an eastern Pennsylvania town, there has been for some years an exhibit for the passing public called "Roadside America". It is an extensive scale model of a typical rural countryside, the United States of legend, nostalgia, and not infrequently, reality. There is a splendid redundancy that is striking in the concept, there, of people stopping along the road to enter a building to glimpse, in effect, the road they have just left. It is, I think, much like the way in which the fiction of John Steinbeck illustrates this same "Roadside America" in a process of historical change. And because the study of Steinbeck's novels involves the evolving attitudes of the man himself, something of the same sort of doubling of attention to America in-motion takes place within Steinbeck's criticism as takes place within the tourist attraction I have mentioned.

The brief critical history of *The Wayward Bus* (1947) has been a record of reasonable assumptions insufficiently pursued-and occasionally of sweeping presuppositions vainly applied. Peter Lisca, referring to the book's first reviews, goes on to describe Steinbeck's "pitiless examination" of a materialistic American culture, noting certain thematic devices such as the scars worn by several characters and the sexual longings apparent beneath their surface responses. Lisca considers the bus's journey both from its evident allegorical aspect and also in terms of the "purely visual perception" by which Steinbeck renders scenes as Camera-eye Compositions.³⁵

Bus is a combination of that institutional motion and that frenetic activity which characterize Roadside America, qualities clearly presents even its seldom-seen

film version of a decade later (already an exercise in nostalgia). "There was a hush on the land and great activity," Steinbeck says,³⁶ and that paradox of stillness and motion embodied in the land pervades the "plot" and its characters, underlying and justifying their continuing interaction. Ceaseless activity in search of a peaceful state is the human norm, and dreams are the only immediate means of realizing that objective-though often these dreams are disbelieved in even as they are dreamed. All the people in *The Wayward Bus* are dreams, and therefore most are also deceivers-of themselves or others, and sometimes both.

Steinbeck's perspectives in Bus involve greater interest in individuals than had been the case in such earlier works as *The Grapes of Wrath*, and thus there is emphasis on how individuals' conceptions enactments of their responsibilities to one another account for the state of the overall social fabric. Bus therefore presents a cross-section of persons in varied modes of existence, instead of a species in an ongoing common experience. Rebel Corners, which Steinbeck quickly places in customary historical context so that its larger meanings might begin to appear at once, is a sort of Eden in the "semi desert" with roots in the wellspring of life, across roads (as for its writer and its protagonist) where rebellion (with sexual overtones, like Eden's in the usual lay interpretation) leads its characters outward on the road of their dreams, but with little knowledge of good and evil, or Truth. Thus: a "wayward bus". And if rebellion in Eden, paralleling that upheaval in American history, that conflict of our adolescence, for which the Corners is named, sends men and women out of the garden, whither shall they go? Hollywood beckons, a place where "eventually, all

the adolescents in the world will be congregated" ³⁷ It pulls Pimples and Norma most directly.

From the time when his consciousness was sharpened by first hand observation of political crisis in California's agricultural valleys, Steinbeck developed in his writing a series of remedies for the social evils he saw, these remedies reflect his belief in man's ability to pursue meaningful social goals. The thematic substructures of his greatest social novels (In Dubious Battle and The Grapes of Wrath) are laced through with the novelist's teleological belief in the value of human values in the human progress. Steinbeck celebrates man's ability to emerge ahead of his accomplishments and grow beyond his concepts, when those concepts are framed by a recognition of the unity of all life in a regulated, ordered cosmos. The battle in In Dubious Battle is dubious in that Steinbeck shows how neither blind partisan action nor detached observation can solve the pressing problem faced by the dispossessed and the downtrodden. And The Grapes of Wrath ends in triumph as Steinbeck creates in the character of Jim Casy a man of messianic vision who converts an understanding of the unity of life into a gospel of social action.

How strange, then that Steinbeck followed The Grapes of Wrath (1939) with The Log from the Sea of Cortez (1949) which is the narrative record of the Steinbeck-Ricketts marine Collecting expedition to the gulf of California in the spring of 1940. In this unusual work of travel literature, Steinbeck ostensibly abandons his commitment to concepts of social progress and emerges into a perfect scientific vacuum. The novelist seems to question that that factor of civilization we call

progress; he celebrates the unadorned life-styles of the simple Indians of the Gulf who may someday remain "to sun themselves, to eat and starve and sleep and reproduce" while "a great and godlike race" of North Americans "flew away in four-motored bombers to the accompaniment of exploding bombs, the voice of God calling them home.³⁸

At the beginning of *The Log*, Steinbeck and Ricketts state that their curiosity was not limited :

We wanted to see everything our eyes would accommodate, to think what we could, and, out of our seeing and thinking, to build some kind of structure in modeled imitation of the observed reality.³⁹

They realized, of course, that what they would construct would necessarily be warped by "the collective pressure and stream of our time and race" and by the "thrust of our individual personalities,"⁴⁰ but knowing this, they affirm that they might be able to maintain a balance between 'our warp and the separate thing, the external reality. The oneness of these two might take its contribution from both."⁴¹ Accordingly, they define the structure they build as "a new thing composed of it and us."

In this "new thing" life is a coordinate whole in which all things, even property and suffering, are necessary. Viewing marine life in the tranquil Gulf, Steinbeck and Ricketts emerge as holistic semi-scientists who impose order on chaos by seeking the meaning of the whole from an inspection of the parts. They develop a feeling of fullness "of warm wholeness, wherein every sight and object and odor and experience seems to key into a gigantic whole"⁴² And they approach the borderline of

the metaphysical as they celebrate their holistic worldview in tones more religious than scientific:

....a Jesus, a St. Augustine, a St. Francis, a Roger Bacon, a Charles Darwin and an Einstein. Each of them in his own tempo and with his own voice discovered and reaffirmed with astonishment the knowledge that all things are one thing and that one thing is all things.”⁴³

This perception of the fundamental unity of life represents the quintessence of understanding and is what Steinbeck and Ricketts gleaned from their experience in the Sea of Cortez. And believing that there is no way of conceiving of a holistic universe if the human spirit is not inseparably identified with it all, Steinbeck and Ricketts note how they “slipped into a new frame and grew to be a part of it, related in some subtle way to the reefs and beaches, related to the little animals, to the stirring waters and the warm, brackish lagoons.”⁴⁴ They state that their trip had “dimension and tone” in that the “brown Indians and the gardens of the sea... they were all one thing and we were that one thing too.”⁴⁵

Early in A Russian Journal, Steinbeck writes that “the hardest thing in the world for a man is the simple observation of what is.”⁴⁶ But whereas in The Log, Steinbeck was able to observe what is and still fuse thought and thing into an integrated nucleus with dimension and tone, in A Russian Journal Steinbeck and Capa simply report what they saw as they saw it. The volume is a minor work which tells us what the Russian people wear, what they serve at dinner, how they dance and sing and play. But it really does little to help us achieve a fuller understanding of either the sense described or the minds of the describers.

In real sense, Steinbeck's most important work of travel literature is Travels with Charley in Search of America (1962) which is the published result of the novelist's journey in a camper across the United States with his French poodle, Charley. For one thing, the book is set in this country and it provides Steinbeck with a direct opportunity to recollect on many of his central beliefs about America. Moreover, Travels with Charley is the only one of Steinbeck's travel volumes which is not a collaboration. And so by definition, the reader is not faced with the problem of determining how much of the book is Steinbeck's and how much is someone else's. In 1951, Steinbeck told his editor Pascal Covici, that "there are no good collaboration "since" in utter loneliness a writer tries to explain the inexplicable"⁴⁷ And while it is unlikely that Steinbeck looked back with disfavor on his work with Ricketts in Mexico or with Capa in Russia, Travels with Charley finds Steinbeck in "utter loneliness" with only Charley for companionship, commenting on his land, and as it turns out, on his own life.

The shattering effect of Steinbeck's circumambulatory journey through America seems to have been the inevitable result of his vision of man as animal finally converging with his vision of man as compassionate idealist and Christian. The consequent meeting eventuated in fission, not fusion; and that the lack of synthesis had an enduring detrimental effect on the author-Noble Prize winner or not is only too evident in the work of his last fifteen or eighteen years.⁴⁸ If Steinbeck made us aware of American social ailments in In Dubious Battle and The Grapes of Wrath, both written during the 1930's so did he also have faith then that the

American people would strive to correct the wrong he had exposed. In a sense, American activity during the Second World War confirmed his faith and justified his pride in his country: In *The Grapes of Wrath* he had written:

For man, unlike any other thing organic or inorganic, in the universe, grows beyond his work....Having stepped forward he may slip back but only half a step, never the full step...This you may know when the bombs plummet out of the back planes on the market place, when prisoners are stuck like pigs, when the crushed bodies drain filthy in the dust....If the steps were not being taken, if the stumbling-forward ache were not alive, the bombs would not fall, the throats would not be cut, Fear the time when the bombs stop falling while he bombers live-for every bomb is proof that the spirit has not died. And...fear the time when Manself will not suffer and die for a concept, for this one quality is the foundation of Manself, and this one quality is man, distinctive in the universe.⁴⁸

Two years after the appearance of this declaration of faith in man, the United States entered World War II and put it to the test.

The sudden death of Franklin D. Roosevelt in April, 1945, only a few months after the beginning of his fourth term in office, left Harry Truman in the White House; and the lackadaisical 1948 campaign of governor Thomas E. Dewey of New York, based on his foolish and unwarranted optimism, assured the Democrats of the Presidency for at least another four years. During the Republican Convention of 1952, memories of the war were revivified, and the American people were reminded that not all old soldiers, as it were, "fade away"; despite his lack of political experience, General Dwight Eisenhower was selected on the first ballot to turn as candidate for President on the Republican ticket. His public image as a victorious

military commander—indeed, a war hero—was an attribute not to be dismissed in favor of a more accomplished politician's program; and Eisenhower charged into the campaign with a winning smile, the catch phrase "It's time for a change," and a platform split by party dissension.

Among the many millions of voters attracted to the old soldier's image was John Steinbeck, a former war correspondent of the European and African campaigns, who recalled that "President Harding stirred me toward the Democratic party and President Hoover cemented me there."⁵⁰ Steinbeck's attraction to Eisenhower, however, like that of most American voters, is not difficult to comprehend when one realizes that few people had heard of his opponent before the Democratic Convention in July. Adlai E. Stevenson was highly regarded in Illinois, whereas Governor, he had done much to clean up syndicated gambling and political graft; but outside his own state he was simply unknown. "A year and a half ago, I had never heard of Mr. Stevenson," Steinbeck wrote late in 1952. "A year ago I knew his name and only remembered it because of the usual first name. Until the convention I had never heard nor read a Stevensonian world. And now we hurry through dinner to hear him on radio or to see him on television."⁵¹ Steinbeck's shift from Eisenhower—whom he had been "solidly behind"—was quick and dramatic. He indicated the reason for his rapid change in the foreword to a collection of Stevenson's campaign speeches published during the autumn of 1952. "I have switched entirely because of the speeches," he explained, and continued:

A man cannot think muddled and write clear. Day by day it has seemed to me that Eisenhower's speeches have become more formless and mixed up and uncertain...Eisenhower seems to have lost the ability to take any kind of stand on any subject...Stevenson, on the other hand, has touched no political, economic, or moral subject on which he has not taken a clear and open stand even to the point of bearding selfish groups to their faces.

....With equal pressures we have seen in a pitiful few months the Eisenhower mind crumble into uncertainty, retire into generalities, fumble with friendships and juggle alliances. At the same time Stevenson has moved serenely on, clarifying his position, holding to his line and never being drawn nor driven from his nongeneralized ideals,

....As a writer I love the clear, clean writing of Stevenson. As a man I like his intelligent, humorous, logical, civilized mind.⁵²

For Steinbeck, Adlai Stevenson was the ideal political leader, a man with the integrity and ability to guide the American people in a way that might help them restrain their perpetual restlessness from dissipating their energy and canceling out one action by another in a continuum of profitless paradoxes. "We are a restless, a dissatisfied, a searching people," Steinbeck wrote in America and Americans :

We bridle and buck under failure, and we go mad with dissatisfaction in the face of success....We work too hard, and many die under the strain; and then to make up for that we play with a violence as suicidal.

The result is that we seem to be in a state of turmoil all the time, both physically and mentally...

The paradoxes are everywhere: We shout that we are nation of laws, not men—and then proceed to break every law we can if we can get away with it. We proudly

insist that we have our political positions on the issues—and we will vote against a man because of his religion, his name, or the shape of his nose.⁵³

Steinbeck believed that this restless urge for action was deeply infused in the American character; in "The Leader of the people," Jody's grandfather still dreams nostalgically of his Western passage, and long after it was done he gazed at length out over the Pacific as though he were ready to set sail and continue pushing forward.

Stevenson himself shared this spirit. Like Steinbeck, he thrived well in the outdoors; indeed, Steinbeck's daemon seems to have been guiding Stevenson's pen as he wrote to a friend during his campaign for Governor of Illinois in 1948:

I've seen Illinois in a capsule—the beauty of the south, the fruit belt, the coal fields, the oil fields, the great industrial area around East St. Louis—and every where the rich, black, fecund earth stretching away and away. It gives you a great feeling of pride and power. Shut your eyes for a moment and let the fetid, hot places, the scorched islands, the arid, the cold, the small—all the places of the world where men struggle to live and love and breed—dance through your head. Then open your eyes and look at Illinois, and murmur "thrice blessed land."⁵⁴

"I own farm land in Illinois," Stevenson reminded his listeners at the National Plowing Contest in Kasson, Minnesota [9/6/52], "and I come from a family that has lived in the heart of the farm belt for over a hundred years,"⁵⁵ A favorite photograph of himself was snapped while he sat at the wheel of a tractor, which he could manipulate well; to be sure, he was adept at all the takes of a farmer and could handle the tools accordingly. Again like Steinbeck, he enjoyed camping and hunting; Mrs. Edith Dick, an old Family friend, recalled that "Adlai loved to ride and on snowy Sundays he would hitch up one of the horses and take his family sleighriding....He

showed little boys how to trap and fish along the river bank. They hunted arrowheads in the meadow, and he enlivened canoe trips with tall tales about the Indians.⁵⁶ Mrs. Dicks' description suggests glimpses of a reincarnated Thoreau, whose affection for youngsters was often exhibited in a similar manner. Another delightful photograph displays Stevenson with his three sons, each bearing a shotgun and a hunter's smile of satisfaction over the ring-necked pheasants they had brought down shortly before.⁵⁷

Obviously, however, it was not for his prowess with a canoe paddle or a shotgun that led Steinbeck to regard the Democratic candidate as a political savior of America. Perhaps leaning a little too heavily on exaggeration for effect, Steinbeck charged that until Stevenson emerged to the presidential candidacy, "politics—the word, the practice—had become disreputable to the point where politics and crime were confused in many minds. The career of a politician was for the greedy, the unscrupulous," he continued, in language more than a little like that of Lincoln Steffens, whose muck-racking articles for *McClure's* at the beginning of the century shocked citizens into disbelief over the enormity of big-city political graft. "Men of ideals and conscience avoided politics as an arena where wolves tore at the body of the nation and snapped and snarled at each other," Steinbeck wrote to Stevenson, not long after Adlai's defeat in 1952. "Then in a few short months, you... changed that picture. You made it seem possible for politics to be as it once had been, an honorable, virtuous and creative business.⁵⁸

In the light of his resounding defeat by Eisenhower, it seems doubtful that Stevenson could have done anything whatever during the campaigns that would have altered the results significantly enough to put him in the White House; nevertheless, it is possible that his outspoken honesty in 1952 lost him more votes than it gained. "Let's talk sense to the American people," he reiterated in one speech after another; and drawing upon a Kantian ethic, he stated unequivocally to his audience in Richmond: "We must do right for right's sake alone."⁵⁹ In Baltimore he told his listeners that if he is elected there is going to be "no park-barreling while our economy is in its present condition. If your principal interest in life is getting a new federally financed boon-doggle for your state you had better vote for somebody else."⁶⁰ And to the automobile workers in Detroit: "...labor unions must conform to standards of fair conduct and equal protection in the exercise of their stewardship. A few unions...abuse (their) trust by excluding from membership some who want to work, denying them a vote, denying their seniority rights because of the color of their skin or because of restrictive notions about employment security. That not right." And a few moments later: "We can not...tolerate shutdowns which threaten our national safety, even that of the whole free world. The right to bargain collectively does not include a right to stop the national economy."⁶¹

What becomes increasingly apparent to a reader of Stevenson's campaign speeches as he moves page by page with the speaker across the nation, is that Stevenson—morally correct, of course, but politically suicidal—spoke to the American people as if they constituted a thoroughly enlightened electorate having

more concern with far-reaching legitimate issues than with public image and self-interest. As an honest man, however, Stevenson had no choice. "To trade integrity for a quick promotion or to sacrifice self-respect and conviction for the boss's favor is a price I would not pay," he wrote. "Better to be fired for the right cause than to sell your talents for the wrong one. You won't have an opportunity to try out your ideas and ideals, unless you resist the temptation to sell them out. Conscience is a fragile thing."⁶² Using the vigorous aphoristic style of Emerson, Stevenson brought the virtues of nineteenth-century transcendentalism into twentieth-century politics. He was the embodiment of Jefferson's "natural aristocrat," blessed as he was with virtue and talents; Lowell would have considered him a true "gentleman," and Whitman would have declared him a poet—perhaps the poet, the seer, for whom America was waiting.

If Stevenson was disillusioned with the American people after the elections, he seldom revealed it in public. Like Jefferson, he recognized the essential value of an enlightened electorate in a free democracy, and even after his defeat in 1952 he continued to promote his view that a "genuinely free and an honestly informed people will ultimately triumph over intolerance, injustice and evil from without or within. But a lazy people, an apathetic people, an uninformed people or a people too proud for politics, is not free. And," he added, "it may quickly be a mob."⁶³ In an address delivered at Harvard the previous year, his American idealism fairly glowed : " ... poverty, oppression and ignorance have always been our concern, and those who see virtue only in self-interest and self-preservation mistake, I think, our

character and misread our history.....A propitious political accident... has made our inborn compassion co-ordinate with the national interest.”⁶⁴

Stevenson refused to be satisfied with the apparent American tendency—indeed, world tendency—to strive mightily for, and to a large extent achieve, mastery over natural forces while moral concerns remained ignored and buried beneath increasing piles of atomic waste. ‘After all,’ he wrote in 1955, “the great issues of the day are not technical, they are moral,”⁶⁵ Steinbeck agreed, emphasizing the pernicious fear generated by the atomic revolution: “And just as surely as we are poisoning the air with our test bombs,” he observed in his Introduction to *Once There Was a War* (1958), “so are we poisoned in our souls by fear, faceless, stupid sarcomic terror.”⁶⁶ Stevenson, in contrast, found the new atomic technology awesome but not necessarily fearful, for atomic power is of nature, and nature is neutral. “In any case,” he said, “let us not cower with fear before this new instrument of power....there is no evil in the atom; only in men’s souls... the way to deal with evil men has never varied; stand up for the right, and if needs must be, fight for the right.”⁶⁷ Reasserting the high value of American democracy in a world at once menaced and blessed with man’s new control over atomic power, Stevenson proclaimed that the United States must never disregard “the moral sentiments of human liberty and human welfare embodied in the Declaration of Independence and the Bill of Rights.”⁶⁸ Over and over, Stevenson extolled the intrinsic virtues of a “thriving, full-bodied democracy,”⁶⁹ which he defined as “honest disagreement...liberty coupled with responsibility,”⁷⁰ a means of self-government in

which "all the people reason together, reason aloud, reason their way to clarity of judgment and unity of purpose."⁷¹

Stevenson's constant appeal to the moral intelligence of the common citizen made a strong impact on Steinbeck, who regarded himself as one of the "so-called 'people'" all his life⁷² "We always underrate the intelligence of the 'people,'" he observed in 1952,⁷³ and later, in *Travels with Charley*, he confessed: "I admire all nations and hate all governments."⁷⁴ But if one can judge from the rest of his traveler's tale, Steinbeck's affection for the people was projected with more lip-service than soul. It was difficult for him to maintain faith in a nation of withdrawn materialists, each hunting his own Great Carbuncle composed of plastic and smelling of cash. In a published letter to Stevenson, written upon his return from England and less than a year before he commenced his peregrination in "Rocinante," Steinbeck itemized his two "first impressions" of America after an extended stay abroad:

First, a creeping, all pervading, nerve-gas of immorality which starts in the nursery and does not stop before it reaches the highest offices, both corporate and governmental. Two, a nervous restlessness, a hunger, a thirst, a yearning for something unknown—perhaps morality. Then there's the violence, cruelty and a hypocrisy symptomatic of a people which has too much, and last, the temper surely, ill temper which only shows up in humans when they are frightened.⁷⁵

Throughout the letter he excoriated the pervasive immorality and materialistic values that had observed in his native land, and he concluded that "Someone has to reinspect our system.... We can't expect to raise our children to be good and honorable men when the city, the state, the government, the corporations all offer

higher rewards for chicanery and deceit than for probity and truth. On all levels it is rigged, Adlai. Maybe nothing can be done about it, but I am stupid enough and naively hopeful enough to want to try."⁷⁶ The weak ray of hope expressed in his concluding line probably points directly to the underplaying purpose of his nomadic journey. Stung by Stevenson's two defeats and despondent over the malignancies he had perceived in America society—"On all levels it is rigged," he had written—Steinbeck needed to go back among the people and discover whether the fault lay with the nation or the government.

The issue of a "rigged" morality was nothing new to Stevenson. If he was "resolutely idealistic on issues," as Stephen A. Mitchell has suggested, so was he also "realistic about politics and politicians."⁷⁷ In *America and Americans*, Steinbeck, recalled an incident that had occurred between Stevenson and Sam Rayburn: Stevenson had insisted upon an open convention to elect the vice-presidential candidate, and Rayburn countered that he had to be appointed. When Rayburn finally relented after hours of debate, he said sadly but kindly to Adlai: "Look, son—look Governor—I'm an old man and I've been through this for many years, and I tell you I don't mind an open convention—as long as it's rigged!"⁷⁸ Who can distinguish with certainty the truth from the humor in Rayburn's statement? Could Stevenson? Having spent now little time in state politics before being drafted as the presidential candidate in 1952, Stevenson, like most Americans, he said, had become "accustomed to political bad manners and billingsgate. After a century and a half we have developed some immunity to vilification, abuse and misrepresentation in our

domestic public dialogue. If not an ornament to the American tradition it is at least a part of it, and we have learned somehow to give it a rough evolution and get along surprisingly well in spite of deceit, demagoguery and verbal violence." ⁷⁹

Stevenson's eclectic reading and dry wit usually enabled him to treat demagoguery with irony and thereby counter attack with barbed sarcasm. He "was the undefeated champion of the deflating retort, the complete squelch and the droll epigram,"⁸⁰ Newton N. Minow has recalled; and Steinbeck, too, like many of Stevenson's associates and acquaintances, appreciated his brand of controlled humor. After pointing out that political jests are usually contrived, irrelevant, and flat enough to avoid injury by implication, Steinbeck noted that Stevenson had changed the technique by "draw(ing) his humor from his subject. His jokes, far from obscuring his message, enlighten it."⁸¹ If Stevenson was not aware of Mark Twain's dictum (expressed in *The Mysterious Stranger*) that the "one really effective weapon" of mankind is laughter, he learned the lesson elsewhere and employed it throughout his political and diplomatic career.

In *The Winter of our Discontent*, Steinbeck had dramatically portrayed, through the first person point of-view, Ethan Allen Hawley's struggles against the temptations of an emerging new morality which stressed materialistic success at any cost. From the first offer of a five percent kickback by a salesman to his own son's rationalization for plagiarism in an essay which won the "I Love America" contest, Hawley repeatedly heard the argument, "Everybody does it"⁸² Eventually he, too, agreed that his inherited morality of honesty and Puritan ethics was as outdated and

impractical as his ancestral talisman in the contemporary society of New Baytown with its mores of dishonesty, laziness, opportunism, and cynicism toward all vestiges of the older morality.⁸³

The older morality of Puritan America had been perverted and inverted in New Baytown to the extent that the Churches symbolically had been replaced by the banks and business, with shrewd bankers and corrupt statesmen as the new ministers. For some of its citizens, the earlier religious ceremonies and rituals gradually had been replaced by shrewd business maneuvers, special deals, and kickbacks. Financial success, no matter how obtained, had become more important than the Biblical teachings; and getting caught, the new definition of sin. Ethan Allen Hawley struggled heroically, but he finally died to his Puritan morality during the Easter weekend and was resurrected a disciple of the new morality of New Baytown.

Though Ethan Allen Hawley decided to forsake the new morality before it destroyed his own family, this "moral wasteland of contemporary American existence,"⁸⁴ as represented in New Baytown and its representative citizens like Ethan Allen Hawley, tremendously disturbed Steinbeck in 1960. For this reason he felt compelled to re-examine this new America which seemed to have emerged since Steinbeck had left the Salinas Valley in California and had gone to the large city in the east.

Although he repeatedly states in *Travels With Charley* that he made his tour through nearly forty states to observe the land and its people objectively and casually, it soon becomes obvious in this panoramic travelogue that Steinbeck's motivation

was basically romantic and his account of the tour, highly subjective. He was searching for people and places quite different from that which he had found in his fictitious New Baytown, as a brief examination of his account of the tour will indicate.

Steinbeck's romantic emphasis on a compensating good for every evil observed along the journey ended abruptly, however, after his two days of philosophic meditation in nature's cathedral beneath the giant Sequoia redwoods boarding Oregon and California. Hereafter his perceptions of the people and conditions became increasingly realistic as he himself gradually changed from a romantic person like Don Quixtoe to an enlightened American like Monsieur Ci Git whom he later met near New Orleans.

During the months and years following the publication of Travels With Charley (1962), Steinbeck not only could not forget this new found image but also became increasingly perturbed by the "sausage-like propaganda" which was being ground out about America by non-American writers. He himself had lived all his life in America and in 1960 had revisited this land and its people—his land and his people, not merely a fictive construct. And so he felt compelled, and qualified, to write America and Americans (1966).⁸⁵

In 1960 at Femont' Peak near Monterey, as he had written in Travels with Charley, Steinbeck had reflectingly thought to himself:

It would be pleasant to be able to say of my Travels with Charley,

"I went out to find the truth about my country and found it" And then it would be such a simple matter to set down my findings and lean back comfortably with a fine sense of having discovered truths and taught them to my readers."⁸⁶

Half a decade later, as he writes in the Foreword to *America and Americans*, he has discovered some new truths about this "complicated paradoxical, bullheaded, shy, cruel, boisterous, unspeakably dear, and very beautiful" (America).⁸⁷ And so he accepts his role as America's prophet to interpret these new truths and to warn people of any impending doom, although it sometimes is very painful for him to do.

Writing in the first person, as he had in *Travels with Charley*, Steinbeck in *America and Americans* shifts from a descriptive, panoramic travelogue structure to a topical, journalistic editorial structure to present his candid appraisal and judgment of his newfound age of America and the Americans. He admits in the Foreword to the book that he can not pretend to be objective in his analysis but insists that his opinions are "informed by America and inspired by curiosity, impatience, some anger, and a passionate love of America and the Americans."⁸⁸ It is from this vantage point that he examines several of the more unique characteristics and truths about our nation and its people in the mid-1960's.

America and its people have a right, says Steinbeck, to be proud of the achievement which is appropriately expressed in the motto, "E Pluribus Unum." America did not exist; it was created by our work, bloodshed and tears:

We built America and the process made us Americans—a new breed, rooted in all races, stained and tinted with all colors, a seeming ethnic anarchy. Then in a little,

little time, we became more alike than we were different—a new society; not great, but fitted by our very faults for greatness, *E Pluribus Unum*.⁸⁹

“*E Pluribus Unum*” recounts the early settlement of America and it reiterates the book’s central idea of the paradoxical unity of the American people. Steinbeck’s brief personal interpretation of the first settlers stresses the development of a country by people who wanted to exclude other religious groups. He tells the story of a minority that became a majority through restlessness, hard work, and ferocity, yet that feared and struggled against the inclusion of the “strangeness, weakness, and poverty” of other minority groups. The eventual emergence of the American out of the selfishness, bigotry, and bullying that marked the settlement of America came about, according to Steinbeck, through the natural and inevitable process of change and adaptability:

What happened is one of the strange quirks of human nature—but perhaps it is perfectly natural direction that was taken, since no child can long endure his parents. It seemed to happen by instinct. In spite of all the pressure the old people could bring to bear, the children of each ethnic group denied their background and their ancestral language.⁹⁰

From diverse ethnic and national background, we have merged and blended into a new American identity except in the cases of American Indians and the imported Negroes.⁹¹ Together as a united people we have pursued a unique goal known as The American Dream. At the same time, however—and this is Steinbeck’s great concern in the work, we have repeatedly proved to be “a restless, a dissatisfied, a searching people” who “seem to live and breathe and function by paradox.”⁹²

"Paradox and Dream" extends the idea of paradox in the American experience to include what Steinbeck feels is the most paradoxical pattern of all: "Our passionate belief in our own myths."⁹³ Self-reliant but strangely dependent on mechanical gadgets, publicly puritanical but sometimes privately profligate, the American continually exhibits the gap between illusion and reality evident in a comparison of the American dream and the American way of life. The dream, itself, derives the American as if he is caught by a collective unconscious which stirs him to see his home as a symbol of personal safety and comfort and allows him to accept weapons and violence as an essential part of life. At the same time however the dream embodies all hopes for peace. Steinbeck interprets our folk tales, though rooted in violence, as essentially moral: "I wonder whether this folk wisdom is the story of our capability. Are these stories permanent because we know within ourselves that only the threat of violence makes it possible for us to live together in peace?"⁹⁴

The next chapters "Government of the People" and "Created Equal" offer a paradox within themselves and between each other. Steinbeck, on the one hand, points to the fear and hatred Americans, have for any form of religious, political, or bureaucratic power. He notes, however, that regardless of the tendency of mediocre and corrupt individuals to control politics, the excellent architecture of our government has insured individual rights and political stability. The individuals who have sought their rights as American and endured the worst that Americans have done to other Americans are the Blacks. Steinbeck's history of the Black in America focuses on the issue of slavery and after slavery, the tactics whereby constitutional

rights are denied by local Customs, law, and law-enforcement officers. The paradox he sees lies in the practice of Americans, who hate power and oppression, preventing a minority group of Americans from assuming rights guaranteed by the finest governmental structure in the history of man.

We ardently defend "the American Way of life", but we just as readily seek support from our neighbors and friends to "Go and Fight City Hall"⁹⁵ We are convinced that "politics is a dirty, tricky, and dishonest pursuit and that all politicians are crooks"-from the candidate for school board to the one for the presidency-but them expect the winners of the elections to rule and operate by divine guidance and without error.⁹⁶ Over the years we repeatedly have stated all are created equal but then have continued to deny the Negroes this divine inheritance.⁹⁷ Neither the emancipation of the slaves a hundred years ago nor the recently-passed civil rights laws have prevented white Americans from enslaving black Americans with "the servitudes of debt, of need, of ignorance, and the constant reminders of inferiority"⁹⁸ White Americans seemingly do not realize, Steinbeck points out, that black Americans want nothing more or less than white Americans want—"peace, comfort, security and love". But it will take more than laws to remove the deep-seated suspicion and hurt in the Negroes and the fear and the suspicion in the whites: both races must change their attitudes towards one another. Only when we have reached the stage that we no longer can remember "whether the man we just spoke to in the street was Negro or white" will we have over come the trauma left on society by slavery.⁹⁹

In "Genus Americans" and "The Pursuit of Happiness" Steinbeck focuses on other ominous paradoxes of American life. He observes the obsession with wealth and position which exists in a society that in name is classless, and the fascination that Americans, living in a democratic society, have for rituals, little, and secret organizations. He also points out that the worst manifestation of this cultism in America are the "screwell" groups which interfere with the rights of others: the "Haywire Mother" who keeps certain books from her children, the super patriots who want to preserve the country by using techniques which will destroy it, and the secret organizations which thrive on the fear and hatred of minority groups. Even more ominous for Steinbeck is the complete failure of many Americans to find fulfillment in a society of abundance. The crisis between children and parents, the fear of growing old, the male fascination with women's breasts, are all symptomatic of the sickness of a society which combines mass production with the obsession that each generation must be better, know more, and have more than the previous one. The end result is the question of a leisure which leads many into destructive trouble, and leaves others with the persistence of a vague desire to "go back to the country and try with puzzled failure to re-create a self-sufficient island against the creeping, groping, assembly-line conformity which troubles and fascinates them at the same time."¹⁰⁰

The final chapters in America and Americans examine Americans and the land, the world, and the future. Steinbeck's discussion of the land contains a warning to Americans to cease the abuses committed against what once seemed a limitless continent. His view of Americans and the world stresses the importance of American

literature in establishing the image of America, and the struggle of American writers to create literature totally independent of outside influences: "They learned from our people and wrote like themselves, and they created a new thing and a grand thing in the world—an American literature about Americans."¹⁰¹

The myth of equality, once perverted, divides America and disturbs its natural unity. Steinbeck, however, feels that the perversion and potential loss of the myth of self-reliance is even more destructive to the American character. Any danger to the American's belief in self-reliance threatens the vital spirit of the people. Spiritual maladies, such as what Steinbeck call paedosis, the desire of parents to see their frustrated dreams fulfilled in the life lives of their children, corrupt the American character and insure a lifeless future dominated by feelings of fear and guilt. Advertising groups, calculating the situation exploit the parents' fears, using the children as a market for food, clothes, and various cosmetics, and further insure a future of alienation and spiritual emptiness. The new leader of the people is the corporation man. He represents all the negative characteristics which define the age in which he lives. His whole being, his work, his family, and his future, is shaped by his fear and admiration of the corporation. His life style, revered by so many factors of American life, is a tribute to the corporate status. The single driving force in his life is to conform to those patterns and ideas which will insure success for the corporation, and to convince others to conform by their simple allegiance to the corporation's products. The values of freedom and self-reliance are shunned and replaced by one definite goal-to make money for the corporate god.

Steinbeck feels that mechanization in American life is so severe that only pockets of resistance remain. Too often, however, the individual who senses the monotony and spiritual barrenness of an "assembly-line conformity" has only a vague, groping desire to go back to the land. This feeling has the greatest potential for assuming mythic value, but the first Americans' love for the beauty and abundance of the land, once critical to the American character, has long since been perverted into lust and madness: "it is little wonder that they went land-mad, because there was so much of it. They cut and burned the forests to make room for crops; they abandoned their knowledge of kindness to the land in order to maintain its usefulness. When they had cropped out a piece, they moved on, raping the country like invaders... There has always been more than enough desert in America; the new settlers, like over indulged children, created even more."¹⁰²

By the time Americans began to realize that the land had its limit, the use and effectiveness of the machines had already set in motion, a destructive rape beyond the capability of the early settlers' wildest rage. At the present moment, a new awareness of the vital need to preserve our remaining resources exists, but whether this sense of the necessity to conserve the land can overcome the greed and destructiveness which still continues is a matter frightfully open to question. Steinbeck feels that Americans are an exuberant people, but they act as careless and harmfully as active children. The only time they seem to have consciously sensed that they have moved beyond moral boundaries was after America dropped the atomic bomb on two Japanese cities. In Steinbeck's personal reaction to the

aftershock of that terrible and tragic act lies his own feeling of the moral and spiritual cities in America: "I did not know about the bomb, and certainly I had nothing to do with its use, but I am horrified and ashamed; and nearly every one I know feels the same thing. And those who loudly and angrily justify Hiroshima and Nagasaki—why, they must be the most ashamed of all."¹⁰³

In his critical appraisal of other areas of cultural paradoxes, Steinbeck at times becomes nearly as aphoristic as Benjamin Franklin's Poor Richard. Steinbeck points out, for example, that "in name we are a classless society while in practice the class structure is subtle, ever-changing."¹⁰⁴ From our forefathers we "learned to distrust inherited position, property, and money, but we quickly proceeded to admire the same thing if self-acquired."¹⁰⁵ Moreover, we historically detested the titles, rituals and orders of the aristocratic society but now emulate these hated symbols in our lodges and secret societies.¹⁰⁶ We continue to insist that our children grow up and become responsible adults but "when they are approaching adulthood, we insist that they be children—with the result that there is a warping effect on the whole American personality."¹⁰⁷

Steinbeck, however, consciously delays his analysis and judgment of America's most serious problem until his last chapter in the book, because he knows that it will be difficult for him to criticize the people he loves. But just as the traveling Steinbeck earlier could not avoid the harsh realities of the Deep South, just so the editorializing Steinbeck cannot conclude his important journalistic analysis of America without discussing the "creeping, evil thing that is invading every cranny of

our political, our economic, our spiritual, and our psychic life.”¹⁰⁸ Steinbeck cannot ignore this thing because his personal observations during his tour in 1960 and his study of history have convinced him that this evil, or “subtle and deadly illness,” is the single cause for many of our social ills in the mid-1960’s:

...racial unrest, the emotional crazy quilt that drives our people in panic to the couches of the psychoanalysts, the fallout, dropout, copout insurgency of our children and young people, the rush to stimulant as well as hypnotic drugs, the rise of narrow, ugly, and vengeful cults of all kinds, the distrust and revolt against all authority, political religious, or military, the awful and universal sense of apprehension and even terror, and this in a time of plenty such as has never been known—I think all these are manifestations of one single cause.¹⁰⁹

Looking at America and this evil thing as objectively as possible, Steinbeck begins with his usual admiration of us Americans for our many achievements, especially the gaudy achievement of surviving many complex paradoxes. But then he wonders why we seemingly cannot resolve a paradox so simple as our fear of being alone and our even greater fear of being together. He wonders what has happened to us in recent years what our parents had that now is lost, or at least being lost¹¹⁰

One rather obvious answer, which Steinbeck is convinced of by this time, is the loss of rules—“rules concerning life, limb, and property, rules governing deportment, manners, conduct, and rules defining dishonesty, dishonor, misconduct, and crime.” Our forefathers did not always obey all the rules, but they at least believed in the rules and severely punished all violators. Today, America has lost theses “pragmatic brakes” and instead, seems to believe that “it’s all right because everybody does it”¹¹¹

Gallantry and responsibility formerly were our hallmarks, but they have been replaced with self-pity, gold-bricking, bribery, cheating, espionage, violence, murder, and non-involvement—even if some one nearby is being attacked or murdered¹¹² Moreover, we have become so obsessed with our fears and anxieties that we seek relief from psychiatrists, the church, sleeping pills, and pep pills, instead of strength from within ourselves. Consequently, our America is on the verge of both a moral and a nervous collapse¹¹³

In spite of these disheartening facts, however, Steinbeck still has hope and has confidence in America and his fellow Americans:

We have not lost our way at all. The roads of the past have come to an end and we have not yet discovered a path to the future. I think we will find one, but its direction may be unthinkable to us now. When it does appear, however, and we move on, the path must have direction, it must have purpose and the journey must be filled with a joy of anticipation, for the boy today, hating the world, creates a hateful world and then tries to destroy it and sometimes himself. We have succeeded in what our fathers prayed for and it is our success that is destroying us.¹¹⁴

In other words, we can find a new way and so can stop our steady movement toward collapse and death, if we will learn from our past and so develop goals and values more durable than those subtle destroyers of nations known as comfort, plenty, and security¹¹⁵

Steinbeck likewise is convinced that the restless energy which always has been and still is present in Americans is the catalytic force which will enable our

country to alter its present course toward self-destruction. Though this energy often has found expression in negative, violent forms, it can be diverted into constructive channels. To what extent we Americans will be successful in this channelling of our restless energy or how we will react to the new circumstances or the future for which we will need to make new rules, it is impossible to predict, Steinbeck admits. We Americans will make many mistakes just as we have in the past, but we also have been endowed, by history and experience, with all we need to be able to succeed.¹¹⁶

As he states in the afterword:

We have failed sometimes, taken wrong paths, paused for renewal, filled our bellies and licked our wounds; but we have never slipped back—never.¹¹⁷

Thus, Steinbeck concludes this book of editorial essays with a reaffirmation of his perennial confidence that our America and we Americans will continue to persist and persevere, even in the mid-1960's.

Steinbeck's tremendous concern for, as well as optimistic confidence in, America and in his fellow Americans is not peculiar to *The Winter of Our Discontent* (1961), *Travels with Charley* (1962) *America and Americans* (1966)—it is implicit in each of his works of fiction and nonfiction. What is unique in these three works is the fact that Steinbeck's new image of his country and its people is a prophetic one. Moreover, Steinbeck himself becomes increasingly involved in his prophetic vision and judgment of America and the Americans during the perplexing, changing 1960's.

The initial phase of Steinbeck's prophetic vision, as dramatized in *The Winter of Our Discontent*, had shocked its prophet-author enough that he had decided to

immediately tour America in order to find out whether or not Americans really were being corrupted by the new morality of material success at any cost. The second phase of his vision, as described in *Travels with Charley*, not only graphically revealed that America was a complicated, paradoxical, and "troubled place... (with) a people caught in a jam,"¹¹⁸ but also began to involve Steinbeck personally in some of the complex problems facing Americans in the early 1960's. Unable to detach himself from his country and its rampant social ills in the mid-1960's, Steinbeck in the third and last phase of his vision, presented in *America and Americans*, fully assumes his prophetic role by boldly judging his fellow Americans for having forsaken their former commitments, values, and rules. As a result they have become a "restless... dissatisfied... searching" people who "seem to live and breathe and function by paradox."¹¹⁹ But, he also declares, Americans still possess certain intrinsic qualities and perpetual energy which can and, hopefully, will enable them and the country to persevere and prevail.

Steinbeck's increasing personal involvement in his prophetic vision also is evident in the form, structure, and point-of-view of these last three works. The first is a novel; the second, panoramic travelogue; and the third, a series of editorial essays—but all are written in the first person. Shifting from a fictive narrative to generally non-teleological observations during a tour to teleological analysis, Steinbeck becomes increasingly involved in the central issues and his eventual appraisal and judgment of them. Nevertheless, though shocked and concerned, he always retains and expands his basic hope and confidence in his fellow Americans: in

The Winter of Our Discontent, in Ethan Allen Hawley; in *Travels with Charley*, in people like the Good Samaritan service station attendant in Oregon and the enlightened Monsieur Ci Git in New Orleans; in *America and Americans*, in all Americans who will be willing to attempt to channel their restless energy toward a new path and a new set of rules. And it is on his positive note that Steinbeck concludes his prophetic vision of his America and the Americans in the turbulent 1960's.

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CHAPTER 6

THE ART OF FICTION

John Steinbeck was a versatile writer who developed several patterns of writing, and made use of a large wealth of forms, ideas, themes and techniques. Some of his works show that he sees man's position in the universe as naturalistic because he finds man at the mercy of certain uncontrollable and unforeseeable forces, but at the same time, he finds man capable of resisting these forces. Nature, fate, heredity, environment, society-these seem to deprive man of his free choice. Steinbeck's biological view of man, i.e. that man has animal instincts and drives, also seems to refute the belief in man's nobility, dignity and free moral choice. He views man as an organism, both as individual and as a part of a group and at many places, he clearly establishes comparisons between men and animals, particularly sea-creatures. His biological view, complete objectivity and non-teleological thinking also led him to a naturalistic vision of life. But his non-teleological approach makes his world more subtle and convincing. And he is able to treat very controversial subjects such as labour-strikes, migrant-labourers in search of livelihood, the dehumanization of workers by the governing classes, social and political injustices etc. without being biased, didactic or sentimental. But his objectivity does not alienate him from humanity. It rather leads to an extension of stark reality to present what "is", and stops lapsing into propaganda.

Steinbeck's biological view of man and his realistic and naturalistic picture of the world and mankind are well balanced with his moral approach. His belief that man's awareness of his position raises him above the ordinary level, and his developing consciousness enables him to face the eternal conflict between good and evil. He does not present man simply a victim of the world. No doubt the forces of nature, fate, heredity and social environment influence man's choice. But he is not a helpless victim of these forces because he has been given the freedom to choose from the various courses open to him. He may exert this choice thoughtfully and overcome the inherent difficulties of his situation and attain whatever salvation is possible.

Throughout his literary career, Steinbeck continually attempted to reconcile several incompatible views of mankind. Owing to his wealth of themes, forms and techniques, the categorization of his works is a very difficult task. He has successfully merged scientific ideas, social realities, economic thoughts, biological views and non-teleological reflections with moralistic approach, artistic forms and cosmic consciousness. His desire to convey social realities sometimes caused him to over-sympathise with characters who are victims of society to the point of being accused of sentimentality. On the other hand, his tendency to be objective left him to the charge of being too detached. His later fiction is characterized by a predominance of social

problems while, in his early works, there is scientific objectivism and subjective social commentary.

Steinbeck wrote with the purpose he has advocated. He has exposed the economic system, organized religion, middle class values, businessmen's world, the hazards of war and the way society treats its misfits. He has given vent to feelings of disillusionment many times because of the great depression, economic upheaval and the ethical erosion. He has depicted human existence as a conflict and often as a savage battle but he was essentially an affirmative writer. He has expressed faith in the capacities of men to make life worth-living. The heterogeneous racial structure of the American society, the world of commerce with high-headed business executive engaged in all exclusive worship of goddess 'success', the world of letters, determined by practicalists and dewy-eyed visionaries, all result in a wide variety of characteristics in American life and all are represented in the works of John Steinbeck.

Steinbeck has mingled his social realism with his biological view of man and his non-teleological thinking. According to Richard Astro, his interest in marine biology dates back to the days before he met Edward F. Ricketts. Astro has observed that Steinbeck was originally influenced by William Emerson Ritter's doctrine of the organismal conception that all parts of nature are part of a gigantic whole, and the only unit of life is the organism.¹

Steinbeck has viewed man as an organism, both as individuals and as a part of a group, especially in In Dubious Battle and Cannery Row and later in Sea of Cortez he has clearly established this view. In The Grapes of Wrath, the miserable plight of the migrants is due to the unbalanced system because a small number of people control the land and money. Their future becomes hopeful only when the migrants establish commensal relationship. Steinbeck's biological interest played a dominant role in determining his attitude to man and the life-processes in the world. A number of critics like Edmand Wilson, Alfred Kazin and Stanley Edgar Hyman designated Steinbeck's attitude to human beings as no more than animalistic. Steinbeck once observed, "I find it valid to understand man as an animal before I am prepared to know him as a man."²

In fact he preferred all that is natural—the land and the sights around, the paisanos who are close to earth as opposed to commercial successes. He has celebrated a natural "philosophic moral system" in Tortilla Flat. He always accepted what 'is' that is, what the reality is. His acceptance of what 'is' along with his interest in biology contributed to his use of naturalism. In his story 'Flight', Pepe has no control over the forces of environment, heredity, nature and society. But unlike earlier writers of naturalism, like Zola, Crane or Norris, he did not believe that these forces deny man his free will. He balanced his use of biology with psychological element in his fiction. He has

made extensive use of animal imagery to depict Pepe, Johny Bear, the woman in "The Snake", Mary Teller and Elisa Allen, yet the emphasis is on psychological realities. He has created many psychological portraits, and while analyzing them, he has used them to analyse the psyche of other characters also. The psychological dilemma gains wider significance as he relates it to moral problem and cosmic significance as in The Winter of Our Discontent.

Steinbeck developed what he called non-teleological thinking to attain scientific objectivity. In Sea of Cortez, he has explained this, "We discussed intellectual methods and approaches, and we thought that through inspection of thinking technique a kind of purity of approach might be consciously achieved—that non-teleological or 'is' thinking might be substituted in part for the usual cause-effect methods... This attitude has no bearing on what might be or could be as if so-and -so happened. It merely considers conditions 'as is'.³ He has illustrated this by discussing that part of the cause of unemployment during the Depression which was due to 'shiftless' and 'negligent' destitute families that had to be supported by the government.

Steinbeck's social realism became more subtle because of his approach. Non-teleological thinking requires complete objectivity and detachment like that of a scientist. He regards mankind and society as subject to the same laws of nature that govern other living organisms. So he could treat many controversial subjects without becoming biased,

didactic or sentimental. He achieved such objectivity in In Dubious Battle, which he described as 'a brutal book'. He said that it was more brutal because in it there was no author's moral point of view. Without giving any authorial comment, he has successfully exposed social realities such as unbalanced land distribution, mob violence, the manipulation of human beings and the loss of individuality. To portray stark realities of life he collected materials for his The Grapes of Wrath after travelling extensively and living with migrant workers. What a non-teleological thinker really experiences, Steinbeck claims, is not a loss of feeling and emotion but an immense expansion. "Non-teleological methods more than any other seem capable of great tenderness, of an all-embracingness which is rare otherwise".⁴

Richard Astro has observed that Steinbeck's philosophy of life is a dualistic philosophy, a combination of cosmic idealism and empirical realism. He has traced this dualistic philosophy in the character development of Jim Casy, who began as a non-teleological visionary believing that "there ain't no sin and there ain't no virtue. There's just stuff people do"⁵ but develops into a teleological activist. Like Jim Casy, Steinbeck also moved from non-teleological thinker to involved social realist. The objective portrait of the strikers and strike in In Dubious Battle was followed by a sympathetic portrait of the workers in Of Mice and Men and The Grapes of Wrath which shows the response of an involved writer without lapsing into propaganda of

sentimentalism. In his later novels such as Burning Bright and East of Eden, Steinbeck has criticised society through authorial comments rather than 'showing' it to us through technique.

Steinbeck's use of mentally retarded characters has been a widely discussed matter. They have been called half-wits, freaks, idiots, animals, beast-men etc. But he has established their retardation in less pejorative terms. For example, he writes about Tularecito: "After the fifth year his brain did not grow any more". He further adds, "He is not crazy; he is one of those whom God has not quite finished".⁶ Maxwell Geismer saw them as 'freaks' designed for our amusement. To Geismer Lennie is "more like a digestive disturbance than a social problem".⁷

Steinbeck's retarded misfits are, in fact, mirrors because their treatment by society reflects society's attitude, prejudice and injustice. Also, there are times when some of these retarded characters serve in the capacity of literary foils. By contrast, they serve to develop the characteristics of other characters such as Tularecito of Bert Munroe, Hazel of Doc, and Lennie of George. Society makes no allowance for the retarded misfits and the writer's criticism of the society is obvious because some of these retarded misfits are more admirable than the civilized people around them. His other misfits are the paisanos of Tortilla Flat, and Mack and the boys in Cannery Row, because they represent qualities that he admired as opposed to the values of society,

His compassion for the mentally retarded transcends his compassion for the underprivileged classes.

Steinbeck has exposed many social evils such as hypocrisy, corruption, violence, unfair business practices and dehumanization. The characters who covet or practise these things are the villains of his fiction. He has portrayed and condemned the social injustices in a number of his novels. He has shown his concern for the less fortunate by emphasizing the way society treats them such as the efforts of the growers in *The Grapes of Wrath* to reduce the migrants to the level of animals and the sub-human attitude towards retarded misfits. He has condemned the efforts of society to force a hypocritical system of values on all people. Those who do not go with the society's way of thinking are misfits. They are either destroyed or institutionalized by the hostile and uncaring society. Junius Maltby in *The Pastures of Heaven* is forced to leave his idyllic existence in the valley and the Lopez sisters are condemned for their 'innocent' way of prostitution.

Steinbeck's concern with morality is visible in all his works from Henry Morgan's amorality to Ethan Hawley's conversion to conformity. His criticism of organized religion and conventional morality abounds in such works as *Cup of Gold*, *The Pastures of Heaven*, *The Pearl* and *The Winter of Our Discontent*. Although he does not criticise anyone's belief in God, he does find fault with certain products of organized religion; intolerance, fear, hypocrisy and greed. He has found fault in

factions of Protestantism as seen in Burton in To a God Unknown and in religious fanaticism as shown in the depiction of the Weed patch camp in The Grapes of Wrath. He was neither a pagan nor an atheist. He repeatedly advocated a humanitarian religion based on love and understanding as shown in the character of Jim Casy and the songs of The Pearl. He has established free moral choice for man in East of Eden. He believed that man is capable of great love, only he has to learn to accept his cosmic identity, that is, to learn that he is an integral part of the whole design of existence. He has observed in his Nobel Prize Acceptance Speech that "he lived, as a writer, to celebrate man's proven capacity for greatness of heart and spirit, courage, compassion and love" and secondly that "a writer who does not believe in the perfectibility of man" cannot claim to have a true vocation.⁸

Steinbeck has an abundance of every gift and craft the novelist can have-except an intelligent and coherent sense of what structure is and can do. Austin Warren and Rene Wellek thus defined both structure and materials:

It would be better [in view of the difficulties in the use of such terms as form and content for literary analysis] to rechristen all of the aesthetically indifferent elements "materials", while the manner in which they acquire aesthetic efficacy may be styled "structure." This distinction is by no means a simple renaming of the old pair, content and form. It cuts right across the old boundary lines. "Materials" include elements formerly considered part of the content,

factions of Protestantism as seen in Burton in To a God Unknown and in religious fanaticism as shown in the depiction of the Weed patch camp in The Grapes of Wrath. He was neither a pagan nor an atheist. He repeatedly advocated a humanitarian religion based on love and understanding as shown in the character of Jim Casy and the songs of The Pearl. He has established free moral choice for man in East of Eden. He believed that man is capable of great love, only he has to learn to accept his cosmic identity, that is, to learn that he is an integral part of the whole design of existence. He has observed in his Nobel Prize Acceptance Speech that "he lived, as a writer, to celebrate man's proven capacity for greatness of heart and spirit, courage, compassion and love" and secondly that "a writer who does not believe in the perfectibility of man" cannot claim to have a true vocation.⁸

Steinbeck has an abundance of every gift and craft the novelist can have-except an intelligent and coherent sense of what structure is and can do. Austin Warren and Rene Wellek thus defined both structure and materials:

It would be better [in view of the difficulties in the use of such terms as form and content for literary analysis] to rechristen all of the aesthetically indifferent elements "materials", while the manner in which they acquire aesthetic efficacy may be styled "structure." This distinction is by no means a simple renaming of the old pair, content and form. It cuts right across the old boundary lines. "Materials" include elements formerly considered part of the content,

and part formerly considered formal. "Structure" as a concept includes both content and form so far as they are organized for aesthetic purposes.⁹

As a gloss on this definition, consider the established distinction "with respect to structure" ... between two over-lapping but recognizable types of fiction- the panoramic (or epic) and the dramatic (scenic or well-made)."¹⁰

These definitions summarize a widely accepted perspective in critical theory; that perspective illuminates the essential reason for Steinbeck's inability in most of his novels, especially over a range of novels, to reach the highest eminence. Particularly, he has a continuing difficulty in fusing a structure and specific materials into a harmonious unity.

Steinbeck was very much aware of this problem, as evidenced in private letters and notes, in his published criticism, and in the novels themselves. It is not too much to say that for Steinbeck the significantly conscious effort in writing a novel was located precisely in attempts to work out a relationship between structure and materials. Not many writers—not even Henry James—have been as self-conscious or as puzzled as Steinbeck in facing this aspect of the art of narrative. It follows that Steinbeck is not benefited markedly by his striking if occasional success in handling the relationship between structure and materials, for each try tends to be a new effort within a consistent

range. Most obviously, certain identifiable technical situations recur in Steinbeck's longer fiction.

A Steinbeck novel tends to have either a panoramic or a dramatic structure. Steinbeck works at the extremes; he rarely combines panoramic and dramatic structures. Usually a panoramic structure in a Steinbeck novel is a series of episodes that are related to each other by little more than chronology. A dramatic structure in a Steinbeck novel is more tightly organized: Events and characters are bound neatly into firm relationships by a brief or highly selective time sequence and often by a moral or philosophic motif. Steinbeck uses a fairly relaxed style with a panoramic structure; his dramatic structure has a tenser, more patterned style. A typical defect in a Steinbeck novel is that its structure—whatever its type—is developed for its own sake, independent of the materials, to the extent that structure and materials tend to pull apart. This defect is evident in a majority of Steinbeck's novels, but it is especially evident when Steinbeck relies on allegorical elements or an allegorical scheme to shore up or stiffen either type of structure. On the other hand, a Steinbeck novel is most successful when its structure is fused harmoniously with the greatest possible variety of materials. This success is rare, but it is nearly absolute when it does occur. Finally, in such novels Steinbeck mingles panoramic and dramatic structures in developing the materials.

Steinbeck lists several practical examples which suggest that cause-effect relationships are too simplified to be true in experience, that "the truest reason for anything's being so is that it is", and that the various genuine reasons for anything "could include everything."¹¹ The effect of the theory on structure is that any presumed need for artful design in the novel is no longer valid for Steinbeck. The theory implies that characters and events have an order and a rationale as they appear in the objective world; that art cannot improve on this order and rationale; that hence the only function of the artist is to report accurately whatever he sees in the natural world. This subordination of art to observation results in an exaggeratedly objective realism, an almost wholly undirected panoramic narrative. Steinbeck's last five or six novels exemplify the resulting narrative freedom-or chaos. For example, in the later novels the narrative reach can be epic, or it can be reduced to a series of "true" observations or episodes that are sometimes incoherently free of working thematic relationships. In these novels the reader can be told that certain events have certain meanings within an allegorical system, which forces a conflict between the loose method of narration and the close meaning that is imposed on the narrative. All of these elements are full grown in East of Eden. Significantly, they are present also in Steinbeck's earliest fiction, although much less at an extreme.

The literary application of "is" thinking exaggerates several tendencies that are deeply rooted in Steinbeck's art. The critic's problem, therefore, is to trace and perhaps to explain a development rather than to study a new departure. In short, the career proceeds in a more orderly way than a first glance might suggest, for what may seem to be new starts are deeply rooted in Steinbeck's concern to achieve a harmony between structure and materials.

I propose that to study the novels from this viewpoint can permit a judicious, friendly judgment of each novel in the context of a greater appreciation of a shape to Steinbeck's long career. The unpleasant fact is that too often Steinbeck's work has been viewed piecemeal, even when the critical intention has been to achieve a rounded view. As the main result, Steinbeck's "place" among American writers has continued to be less secure—since less defined—than any of the major novelists of his age. Notoriously, a seesaw of defense or attack in particular instances is the striking characteristic of much Steinbeck criticism. I am not, to be sure, the first or the only Steinbeckian to attempt a rounded evaluation or to think that such evaluation is preferable to self-contained divisions into pro or con. I can but hope that my viewpoint has its claimed efficacy in the candid judgment of the ideal or Johnsonian reader.

Steinbeck begins with a developed sense of the artful in fiction. He does not write a disguised autobiography two of three times over.

From the beginning, he searches for ways to achieve an ordered harmony in his art. He finds two distinct kinds of structure—panoramic and dramatic—to order his materials. Each of the first two novels is a fairly pure example of each structure. A number of aesthetic problems emerge, but Steinbeck does not solve them. Indeed, he is never able to work clear of these problems except partially and (as it were) by accident when circumstances minimize or resolve them. The combination of panoramic and dramatic structures is most evident in In Dubious Battle and to a somewhat lesser extent in The Grapes of Wrath. Steinbeck reaches his peak as an artist in these two novels. Meanwhile, Various events and pressures lead to a simplified approach to structure, as in the three play-novelettes, and the results are unfortunate. At about the same time, "is" thinking offers a promising lead. Following such different novels as Cannery Row and The Pearl and the rather pure allegory, The Wayward Bus (all indebted to "is" thinking, for better or worse), Steinbeck settles on an extreme panoramic structure in East of Eden and the novels that follow. Frequently, in his final years, Steinbeck turned to journalism. In this work, as in all his work, an interest in technique was directed toward a harmony of structure and materials. This sketch reveals a complexity which forbids any simple reduction of Steinbeck's career. He is serious and talented. His extremely uneven career calls for a particularly careful evaluation of his work; it precludes any simplistic dismissal.

Still, beyond the pattern of a constant search for an elusive harmony between structure and materials, it does appear that Steinbeck tends to move away from narrative order over the range of his longer fiction. Steinbeck worked largely by instinct, but he felt a strong need to work from a plan.¹² Often, in practice, he deviated widely and disastrously from a cogent plan that implied the achievement of a harmony between structure and materials; the result could be a novel consisting of a visible structure and visible materials that are not resolved in each other. On rare occasions, when a structure is "given", so to speak (in the sense that *The Pearl* is a natural parable), Steinbeck reverses his movement away from order. Whether total or partial, this reversal is momentary at best, but it occurs more than once. Hence, Steinbeck's career proceeds in a series of zigzags, not in a straight line, and he does not "grow" as better or more fortunate writers do by applying the lessons of imperfect earlier work to the present. There is slow but definite movement — much accelerated in his last years — away from order.

This situation creates a number of problems for the analytical critic of Steinbeck's longer fiction. First, the critic must be especially careful and insightful in matching criteria that are inevitably blunt (however closely terms are defined) with the actual complexities in Steinbeck's career. There is the critic's temptation to presume false similarities between novels. In fact, in its order, each novel presents a

somewhat different approach, and often enough a radically different approach, to the achievement of a harmony between structure and materials. The author's search is fairly constant; the particular approaches and circumstances are not. Frequently, even apparent connections between different novels are quite misleading. Group-man occurs in several novels but the meaning of the concept shifts; the character named "Doc" recurs but changes strikingly from novel to novel; even a reuse of materials, such as class war, biological studies, or *paisano* life, does not ensure a thematic similarity between two novels. Yet the uncommonly irregular career does not permit the uncomplicated judgment that Steinbeck merely changed his mind. Certainly there is a pattern in Steinbeck's work, but it is not simple; It is Steinbeck's constant but changing search for a harmony between structure and materials. That search, in its dual directions, justifies the welter of technical devices and the differing materials and clarifies Steinbeck's tendency to move away from order in the latest novels. The one direction suggests efforts to achieve harmony externally, through new devices of materials; the other suggests despair of achieving a harmony. It is true that, at his best, when structure and materials most fully cohere, Steinbeck has produced some of the more distinguished literature of our time, in spite of the equal truth that much of his longer fiction contains enough imperfection to have removed a less gifted writer from critical attention. So the peculiarly mixed bag that John

Steinbeck presents is a special testing of the purpose of criticism: to draw just distinctions, to make correct judgments in complex instances.

A second critical difficulty relates to Steinbeck's tendency to proceed with fresh starts—there are notable exceptions—once it is clear that a certain technique or materials lead away from or do not lead directly toward a harmony between structure and materials. But the vital and constant factor is Steinbeck's continuing efforts to achieve, or at least to define, a fictive harmony.

A third consideration is that panoramic and dramatic structures occur separately or in combination in novel after novel; a specific novel under discussion may be quite different from its neighbors, depending on what kind of structure is predominant and on how adequately it functions.

Fourth, because Steinbeck tends to compose by parts, not by the whole (with some notable exceptions), and can permit himself considerable freedom of invention once the general form of the novel is established, the critic may be faced with a novel in which excellent episodes do not connect fully with other episodes or advance an otherwise strong development. In either circumstance, critical analysis is correspondingly complicated.

Whatever Steinbeck read and whatever he observed in real life became for him a matter to be verified in terms of each other. Literature and theology became valuable to him only when he had put

to test all that he had learnt in the living laboratory of contemporary life. Man is the theme of his novels and stories from Cup of Gold to The Winter of Our Discontent. Man's consciousness, or development is the object of his study with its externalization in the outward social scene. But the externals interested him only so far as they led him to the knowledge of the psychological, moral and spiritual reality. He never told a story to beguile and entertain his readers. He never wrote anything that was not an experience which he shared with his readers. As a keen observer and a first rate thinker, he was always in search of analogies and similarities of life-patterns in human and animal life. Such a study would initiate him into the timeless phenomenon of life on earth. For this, he scanned through the principal theological and religious literature of the east and the west; Jewish, Christian, Hindu and Buddhist. At the same time he studied the social, economic and political working of different nations in Europe in general and of America in particular. He observed closely the rural life and its social conditions and also the urban social order. He examined the pattern of class-war, the problems of the working class, the labourers, and the migrants. But everywhere he dived deeper and saw the nucleus around which the forces of the individuals and the groups work on the level of human consciousness, so that the contraction and the expansion of consciousness, crawling into the shell of egoism and out of it, falling

into a state of spiritual and moral death and being able to resurrect and to redeem itself, became the recurrent theme of his novels.

In his first published novel, Cup of Gold (1929), we can study the young Steinbeck flexing his literary muscles. By any standard, Cup of Gold is a poor book, structurally unbalanced, unconvincing, populated with cardboard characters, and written in an ornate style reminiscent of James Branch Cabell.¹³ On the surface, it would appear to be a completely atypical Steinbeckian production; and yet in this book, if we look closely, we can observe Steinbeck groping toward the effective expression of those themes and philosophies which were influencing his thinking even at that early date. For example, one of the main themes of Cup of Gold is the way in which the desire for wealth and power can corrupt a man's soul and eventually subdue the glowing vitality of his spirit. It is a theme which is also very much in evidence and explored in more penetrating depth in Steinbeck's last published novel, The Winter of Our Discontent (1961).

It is surely significant that the decade separating the publication of Steinbeck's first novel and the publication of his most famous work, The Grapes of Wrath in 1939 coincided with the depression years in America. They were also the years during which Steinbeck produced his best work. Each of Steinbeck's novels of this period reflects, in one aspect or another, the nationwide yearning of the American people for

the better life, a paradise on earth relatively measured against the particular circumstances of the individual seeker.

Young Henry Morgan knows "a desire for a thing he could not name"¹⁴ a desire which is activated by the exciting stories related by the ex-farmhand, Dafydd, recently returned, a rich man, from his exploits in the Indies. Later in the book, when after a series of adventures Henry has become a feared buccaneer, his unformulated longings finally channel themselves into the obsessive ambition to capture the fabulous city of Panama (the "Cup of Gold" of the book's title) and to possess the legendary beauty La Santa Roja. Inevitably, reality destroys the dream. Panama is taken and sacked, but when at last Henry confronts La Santa Roja she humiliates him by repulsing his advances. He ends his days a disillusioned and somewhat ridiculous figure, attempting to reassure himself that "... now that I have lost my unnameable desire, I may not be happier, but there is more content on me".¹⁵

Such ultimate disillusionment (but without the benefit of the possible peripheral contentment that Henry Morgan lays claim to) is also the lot of Joseph Wayne in To a God Unknown (1933) and of the dispossessed Okies in The Grapes of Wrath. Joseph Wayne seeks to realize his dream in "the long valley called Nuestra Senora ... in central California." There he discovers a veritable Eden and establishes his homestead. But by the end of the book, his wife dead, the family

community he had founded with his brothers now totally disintegrated, the land and the animals dying from the terrible drought that has smitten the valley, he can only grievingly reflect: "something has failed ... I was appointed to care for the land, and I have failed."¹⁶ Only by making the supreme sacrifice of his own life is he able to save the land he loves.

The Joad family deludes itself that it will find economic salvation among the fertile peach orchards of California. That old satyr, Grampa, voices his own colourfully sensual idea of what life in the land of plenty will be like: "An', by God, they's grapes out there, just a-hangin over inta the road. Know what I'm a gonna do? I'm gonna pick me a wash tub full a grapes, an' I'm gonna set in' em, an' scrooge aroun', an' let the juice run down my pants."¹⁷ He does not survive to discover the absurdity of his vision. Possibly, he does not believe in it himself, for when the time comes for the family to embark on the long journey to California he becomes overwhelmingly aware that his roots in the home soil are too deeply embedded to be severed. Only by trickery is he forced into leaving and he dies of a stroke that same night when the Joads make camp at the side of the road.

The vast majority of Steinbeck's male characters similarly hunger for and identify themselves with the land and the productive soil. Noah Joad elects to stay by the banks of the Colorado River (the symbolic "beautiful river") and Mr. Wilson, whom the Joads meet on the road,

regards working in the orchards of California simply as a means to an end: "... with them good wages, maybe a fella can get hisself a little piece a land..."¹⁸ In the concluding paragraph of The Pastures of Heaven (1932), the bus driver tells his passengers as he gazes down with them into the valley: "I always think it would be nice to have a little place down there. A man could keep a cow and a few pigs and a dog or two. A man could raise enough to eat on a little farm"¹⁹

The bus driver with his hankering for "a little place" prefigures the two itinerant farmworkers, George and Lennie, in Of Mice and Men (1937). Through the medium of the ill-fated Lennie, Steinbeck gives perhaps the most poignant expression in modern literature of man's yearning for the illusory paradise on earth. While George and Lennie give ostensible purpose to their otherwise aimless existence by their talk of one day in the essentially unspecified future buying their own little plot of land, settling down and breeding rabbits, George nevertheless appreciates the hopelessness of their plans. For him, his countless repetition for Lennie's benefit of the desired components of the ultimate utopia has become rather meaningless. For Lennie, on the other hand, George's well-rehearsed phrases have always possessed a glowing reality in his dim-witted brain and the rabbit farm remains for him an attainable paradise to the very end of his life. He is repeating with pathetic conviction George's mechanical sentences even as he dies.

The theme of the unrealized American dream is carried over, though perhaps with less overall insistence and with somewhat different emphasis, in the novels of the post-war period. For Kino, the simple Mexican fisherman of *The Pearl* (1947), his life's dreams do indeed at first seem to have been realized when he discovers the great pearl "as large as a seagull's egg". It tales the destruction of his home, the hunting down of himself and his family, and the death of his baby son to reconcile him to the inevitable truth that paradise is not contained in material wealth, so that only by throwing the pearl back into the sea from whence it came can he find peace of mind and physical safety. In *East of Eden* (1952) Adam Trask, like Joseph Wayne before him, believes he has found a paradise in the California valleys. He tells his neighbour, Samuel Hamilton; "... I mean to make a garden of my land. Remember my name is Adam. So far I've had no Eden, let alone been driven out" But his idyll is short- lived and he is driven out of his Eden, spiritually, if not actually, by his wife, the evil Cathy, who after shooting him when he tries to stop her, abandons him and their newly-born twin sons to begin her sordid career in the brothels of Salinas. It is perhaps worth noting that in the whole sequence of Steinbeck's novels and short stories the only characters who do in fact appear to attain a comparative contentment of sorts are the drop-outs of *Tortilla Flat* (1935), *Cannery Row* (1945) and *Sweet Thursday* (1954) because

their material needs and their ambitions are almost non-existent, so they are never defeated by temporary adversity.

The irresistible need felt by man to own his little plot of land, put down roots into the earth and identify himself with-and, as it were, merge into — his natural surroundings manifests itself directly or indirectly in three other ways in Steinbeck's fiction, each of these facets being detectable, albeit in an extremely pristine and unformulated manner in Cup of Gold.

First, there is the parallel drawn between man and the creatures of the animal kingdom. During his description of Morgan's march on Panama, Steinbeck tells of small bands of Spanish Indians being "flushed from the thickets like coveys of frightened quail" Ethen Hawley, the protagonist in The Winter of Our Discontent notes; "sometime I've seen a look in eyes, a frenzied animal look as of need for a quiet, secret place where soul-shivers can abate, where a man is one and can take stock of it".²⁰ This analogy between man and animals recurs incessantly throughout the corpus of Steinbeck's work, constantly accentuating the reality of man's closeness to nature and to the atavistic instincts which are only barely disguised and suppressed by the often unreliable veneer of civilization. Animal symbolism and imagery are effectively used in The Grapes of Wrath, where animal attributes are given at one time or another to every one of the principal

characters, stressing the elemental mode of existence forced upon them by unhappy circumstance.

Second, there is Steinbeck's vision of the living body as a metaphor for landscape. In *Cup of Gold*, large rocks strewn along a mountain path are described as "crouched guardian things" and elsewhere mountain are said to have "the appearance of strong gray teeth."²¹ In the opening paragraph of *East of Eden*, the foothills of the Gabilan Mountains are compared with "the lap of a beloved mother."²² In the same way that animal imagery is most tellingly employed in *The Grapes of Wrath*, so the personification of landscape is given its fullest and most effective expression in *To a God Unknown*. In this book, Steinbeck presents the land as a living element in its own right, so that early in the narrative Joseph Wayne, caught up in a sort of pagan ecstasy and overwhelming sexual need, flings himself face downward on the ground and copulates with the land itself: "For a moment the land had been his wife."²³ In the same way that landscape can assume the guise of living flesh so living flesh can assume the guise of landscape. Sitting in dim lamplight in the living room of his house, Joseph Wayne contemplates "his slouched body ... his curved arms and hands resting in his lap ... A mountain range extended in a long curve and on its end were five little ranges, stretching out with narrow valleys between them. If one looked carefully, there seemed to be towns in the valleys. The long curved range was clad in black sage, and

the valleys ended on a flat of dark tillable earth, miles in length, which dropped off at last to an abyss."²⁴

It is but a short step from these sort of analogies to the third and most profound facet of Steinbeck's philosophical preoccupation with man's intrinsic relationship with the land on which he lives, a relationship which indeed encompasses all creation - in other words, the holistic concept. The sage Merlin first voices this concept when he speaks to Robert Morgan, Henry's father, of his fear of dying: "If by my living I give life to you, and fresh existence to the fields and trees and all the long green world, it would be an unutterable deed to wipe them all out like a chalk drawing."²⁵ Joseph Wayne's sister-in-law, Rama, who seems endowed with a mystical understanding of Joseph's true power and purpose in life, tells him: " 'You can't see units, Joseph, only the whole.' "²⁶ At the end of the book when, on the moss-covered rock in the mysterious glade in the center of the dying land, Joseph sacrifices himself by slashing his wrist, the final metamorphosis takes place;

He lay on his side with his wrist outstretched and looked down the long black mountain range of his body. Then his body grew huge and light. It arose into the sky, and out of it came the streaking rain. "I should have known," he whispered. "I am the rain." And yet he looked dully down the mountains of his body where the hills fell to an abyss. He felt the driving rain, and heard it whipping down, patterning on the ground. He saw his hills grow dark with moisture.

Then a lancing pain shot through the heart of the world. "I am the land," he said, "and I am the rain. The grass will grow out of me in a little while."²⁷

This passage parallels Casy's moment of revelation when, in a crisis of self-doubt and confusion, he follows Christ's example and goes into the wilderness to rationalize his troubled thoughts: " 'There was the hills, an' there was me, an' we wasn't separate no more. We was one thing. An' that one thing was holy.'"²⁸ Or, to express it another way, as Steinbeck does in The Log From the Sea of Cortez (1951), "ecology has a synonym which is ALL."²⁹ By the time he came to write The Winter of Our Discontent, however, Steinbeck's overt holistic viewpoint had gradually undergone a partial transmutation into a sense of individual acceptance of collective or universal guilt and responsibility. When some of the leading citizens of the community of Baytown are accused of graft, Ethan Hawley's wife reminds him; " 'You're too sensitive, Ethan. It's not your crime.' " To which he replies; " 'I was thinking maybe it is - everybody's crime.' "³⁰

This concept of communal unity is another of the themes which recur with almost fugue-like consistency throughout Steinbeck's fiction. One can cite as example the conquered township in The Moon Is Down (1942). When, in a passage omitted for some reason from the Bantam Edition, Colonel Lanser, the officer in command of the invaders, initially asks Mayor Orden for his cooperation, reminding him

that the townspeople will inevitably take their lead from him, Orden quickly corrects him; "... authority is in the town. I don't know how or why, but it is so. This means we cannot act as quickly as you can, but when a direction is set, we all act together."³¹ The truth of this statement is swiftly assimilated by colonel Lanser: "'Mayor Orden is more than a mayor... He is the people. He knows what they are doing, thinking, without asking, because he will think what they think. By watching him I will know them.'"³² But, of course, it is implicit that ultimately the community spirit will prevail over armed might, over the implementation of forced labour and the execution of hostages. In fact, the arrest of the mayor, the elimination of the titular and moral leadership serves to cement unity even further.

Such communal singlemindedness of purpose can be observed elsewhere at work in such books as Tortilla Flat, Cannery Row, and Sweet Thursday. The townships concerned are as living organisms, each member of the community dependent upon the others and all acting in concert toward a given aim as he parties in Tortilla Flat and Cannery Row, and the bogus lottery in Sweet Thursday. In these books, the community is a warm and benevolent entity. It is not always so. Because possession of the great pearl makes Kino a man apart, he can no longer be sure which of his friends and neighbours he can now trust. Beneath its ostensibly placid surface, the community is in ferment, collectively envious and antagonistic, rejecting that infinitesimal part

of itself which has become an outsider and which, by definition, poses a threat to the ordered existence of the whole. Similarly, in The Winter of Our Discontent, the town drunk, Danny Taylor, poses a threat to the community of Baytown inasmuch as he refuses, to sell the big meadow, his "ace in the hole" against the future, and thus, by blocking the construction of the airfield the community desires to service the district, standing in the way of community progress. Danny Taylor's elimination is therefore necessary before the community can benefit and flourish. Ironically, it is through the selfish agency of Danny's lifelong friend, Ethan Hawley, who successfully contrives to gain possession of the big meadow on Danny's death, that the community can at least, at Ethan's price, anticipate eventual realization of the long-delayed scheme.

Kino and Danny Taylor can accordingly be regarded as the infected cells of the body communal, which, together with an infection invading the body from without, have to be either cured or eradicated for the continuing healthy state of the total organism. The analogy is drawn by Doc Burton in In Dubious Battle (1936):

When you cut your finger, and streptococci get in the wound, there's a swelling and a soreness. That swelling is the fight your body puts up, the pain is the battle.... Group-men are always getting some kind of infection.... [G]roup men ... seem to me to be a new individual. Not at all like single men. A man in a group isn't himself at all; he's a cell in an organism that isn't like him any more than the cells in

your body are like you.... [I]t might be worth while to know more about group-man, to know his nature, his ends, his desires. They're not the same as ours. The pleasure we get in scratching an itch causes death to a great number of cells. Maybe group man gets pleasure when individual men are wiped out in a war.³³

Later in the book, when the strikers are at last stirred into violent action and set off en masse to attack the barricade erected by the authorities, Jim Nolan wonderingly describes to his mentor, Mac, what he has witnessed: "[I]t was just one big—animal, going down the road. Just all one animal."³⁴ Mac agrees with him: "It is a big animal. It's different from the men in it. And it's stronger than all the men put together. It doesn't want the same thing men want..."³⁵

In the short story "the Leader of the People," written approximately at the same time as *In Dubious Battle* but not published in America until 1938, Mac's words find echo in Grandfather's description of the wagon trains crossing the plains during the previous century: "'It was a whole bunch of people made into one crawling beast. And I was the head. It was westering and westering. Every man wanted something for himself, but the big beast that was all of them wanted only westering."³⁶ Returning to *Cup of Gold*, we find a parallel image in the bird's eye view of Morgan's men hacking their way through the jungle toward the golden city of Panama; "At a command, the head of the wriggling column swung to the left and began to gnaw its way through thicker underbrush"³⁷

The clear seminal role of Cup of Gold in the Steinbeck canon extends also to the author's treatment of sexual mores and attitudes. Steinbeck's philosophy of sex can be conveniently (though by no means definitively) divided into two distinct streams: first, the concept which regards sex as the most dominant of all universal life forces; and second, the view-point which sees women as essentially mere sex objects existing primarily for the instant physical gratification of the male and for the propagation of mankind. If Steinbeck's women are not mere sex objects, then they tend to be either idealized mother figures like Mrs. Tiflin (The Red Pony) and Ma Joad, or idealized prostitutes like the Lopez sisters (The Pastures of Heaven), Dora Flood (Cannery Row), Faye (East of Eden), and Fauna (Sweet Thursday).

It is no coincidence that these big hearted prostitutes and madams are among the most sympathetic (if somewhat heavily sentimentalized) characters in the whole of Steinbeck's fiction, for they undoubtedly express his own philosophy that sex, no matter from what angle one may regard it, is no furtive manifestation of the human psyche but an integral and indispensable factor of life eminently worthy of wholehearted and frequent celebration. Steinbeck has an obvious contempt for those of his characters who deny the sex drive in themselves. Of Joseph Wayne's brother, Burton, We are told he "had embraced his wife four times. He had two children. Celibacy was a natural state for him. Burton was never well."³⁸ For Joseph, on the

other hand, the "hopeless sin was barrenness, a sin intolerable and unforgivable"³⁹ so that he is the vital force which can fertilize and give life even to the land and to the animals, and eventually and symbolically, by the shedding of his blood, the whole valley.

The characters in Steinbeck's fiction can be divided almost equally between those who accept and celebrate sex as a purely physical and spiritual function, and those who, for one reason or another (disinterest, guilt, fear, or disgust), firmly sublimate the sexual drive in themselves. In the first category can be placed characters like Danny and Jesus Maria Corcoran (*Tortilla Flat*), Al (*The Grapes of Wrath*), Doc (*Cannery Row* and *Sweet Thursday*), and Juan Chicoy and Camille Oaks (*The Wayward Bus*), while in the second category, in addition to Burton Wayne, can be placed, for example, Mac (*In Dubious Battle*), Uncle John (*The Grapes of Wrath*) and Mrs. Pritchard (*The Wayward Bus*).

Mrs. Pritchard is, in fact, representative of one of the archetypal Steinbeck females; the wife who refuses her husband his conjugal rights, or, at best, submits coldly and unresponsively to his embraces. One gains the impression that the majority of marriages in Steinbeck's fiction are physically unsatisfactory.⁴⁰ Even those of the idealized mother figures (perhaps not surprisingly) seem curiously sexless. These husbands and wives never seem to kiss each other or exchange much outward show of affection: they are merely companions or partners of a

contract in which the mechanical act of coition is a recognized and unavoidable adjunct. One has only to consider many of the short stories in *The Long Valley* (1938), most of which were written in the early 1930s, to appreciate that Steinbeck's jaundiced perspective on the married state dates back to the beginning of his literary career.⁴¹

Mark Spilka has written perceptively of Steinbeck's own possible early acquired and deep-rooted general animosity toward women,⁴² and it cannot be denied that an attitude suggesting this permeates through into his writings. All too often, his female characters are presented in unfavourable light, culminating, of course, in 1952 with the somewhat sensational overdrawn portrait of Cathy (Kate) in *East of Eden*, a woman altogether devoid of conjugal and maternal instincts, and unremittingly adept at debasing for her own profit and vicarious satisfaction the natural sex urges of the male. There is, indeed, from the opposite angle, a certain unpleasant insistence in the manner in which many of Steinbeck's men tend to regard women solely as a means by which they can relieve their physical needs. Again, this attitude can be traced back to *Cup of Gold*. Henry Morgan looks upon the mulatto, Paulette, "as a delicate machine perfectly made for pleasure, a sexual contraption."⁴³ When she asks him if he loves her Morgan tells her brutally: " 'Why you are just a little animal a pretty little golden animal, for sure, but a form of flesh—no more.' "⁴⁴ It is the same sort of attitude that Jim Moore adopts toward his wife, Jelka: "She was so

much like an animal that sometimes Jim patted her head and neck under the same impulse that made him stroke a horse" ⁴⁵

It could be suggested that having as it were, purged Cathy (Kate) from his system, he was able to view them in his system. Steinbeck was finally able to view them in his subsequent books in a softer and more sympathetic light. This change of attitude can possibly also be seen to be linked with the event of his third marriage in 1950 to Elaine Scott. His third marriage was patently the most contented as well as the longest (it was terminated only by his death in 1968) of his marital relationships. Unfortunately, concurrent with this new stability in his private life, his predilection for sentimentality and whimsy, which had at various times in the past diluted and in some instances ruined the vigour of his work, began to run riot, so that in his final novel the loving epithets exchanged between Ethan and Mary Hawley, while of a kind which would be perfectly natural uttered in the privacy of the marital bedroom, seem, when set down in cold print, almost unbearably coy and embarrassing

If Steinbeck was conscientious in stating the themes of his novels, he was equally conscientious about his style and technique. What strikes the reader on reading his works is that he does not fall in line completely with some of the modernists' known penchant for stylistic devices such as stream-of-consciousness, surrealism, filmic devices, Collage and Montage, painting techniques like Cubism, the

techniques of contracting the space, linguistic devices of missing connectives etc. In his narrative techniques, he does not deviate altogether from the traditional methods of narration, but he bring in modern devices strictly in accordance with the progression of the story, depiction of characters, description of the outer scene or landscape or depiction of the whole psychological world in the mind of his characters. Since he combines the outer and the inner, the physical and the psychological, the social and the spiritual worlds at hand, he modifies the tradition and adds his individual talent combined with the use of modernist devices to make his style fitting for his works.

Steinbeck was very sensitive to words and verbal expressions. He did not believe that the language of literature is different from the language of the people as they speak it. So instead of turning to the language of written English or American books, he turned straight away to the living men and women around him, and introduced in his books the language actually spoken by them in different situations. He believed that language is the gross form of psychological currents of thought and feeling. It, therefore, must be both an individual and a social phenomenon. This kind of thinking helped him in tapping the living sources of language. Besides language, he also felt it necessary to make use of imagery and symbolism to draw parallels between the psychological reality and the physical reality. His imagery and his

language are functional in the sense that they represent transcendence from the mere representation or narration of human activities.

Steinbeck, as has been stated earlier, was a voracious reader. In a letter in 1936 he admitted the deep impact left on his mind by certain books such as Crime and Punishment, Madame Bovary, parts of Paradise Lost and The Return of the Native. He also admitted the profound effect of the works of Anglo- Saxon and old and middle period. He was charmed by Malory's Morte d' Arthur. His Cup of Gold is his experiment with the rich variety of language and is an admixture of a literary and spoken style. According to Peter Lisca: "If one comes to this first novel by way of Steinbeck's later fiction, the most striking thing, apart from historical setting, is its prose style, which often seems indebted to Elizabethan drama and particularly to Shakespeare... Often the echoes are not so specific, but the tone, imagery, and accent of Renaissance drama are there.... A more accurate estimate of Steinbeck's early prose style can be obtained from those passages which he writes in *propria persona*, especially descriptions of nature..."⁴⁶

The learned critic has further observed that Steinbeck's style in Cup of Gold, in the main, is "a literary" style full of personifications and "pathetic fallacies", so it is "archaic"⁴⁷ Cup of Gold was Steinbeck's major experiment not only with the thème of temptation and fall but also with the narrative technique and prose style. The

narrative mode in the book is essentially that of the omniscient author. But at the same time by way of dramatic mode he develops the story through dramatic scenes and dialogue form. This narrative mode is suitable in that it helps the author in transporting his readers into the romantic world of historical past by way of opening up imaginative vistas. He first takes the reader to the geographical location in which the story of Henry Morgan, the young boy, begins. His introduction in this novel as in his later novels begins with a kind of communicative initiation into the microcosm of the novel—Salinas, California. To minimize the impression of the artificial mode of omnipresence of the author, the dramatic form of representation and dialogues between characters are increasingly used. In such moments, Steinbeck gives the impression of having withdrawn himself from the scene like a dramatist. But as the story in *Cup of Gold* is complicated, he makes use of the technique of flash back also. When Morgan left his home, his mother dreams about the past. "He was being baptized in a long white dress... But could she trust this foolish young curate not to let the baby fall while she went?"⁴⁸ Again, the scene of Morgan's death is made highly captivating by way of making his consciousness travel backward and forward like the focus of a camera-eyes in a highly confused and complicated world of impressions, forming, reforming and deforming themselves into concrete images. At the same time, it combines the technique of stream-of-consciousness flowing intermittently in the half

blocked consciousness of Henry. It is more than a simple narration; it is a kind of psycho-analytical technique of making a clinical examination of a fragmented human consciousness. At the same time, it is made parallel to the filmic devices of dimming, dissolving, fading in and fading out. For example;

Then he saw that the little beings were crouching before an approaching form... Why, it is Elizabeth... Henry had noticed a peculiar thing. If he looked steadily at one of the crouched, faceless beings, it disappeared... He looked for Elizabeth, but she, too had disappeared. In her place there was a red smouldering ember, and the light was dying out of it.⁴⁹

In his narrative mode Steinbeck makes use of the dramatic element in *Cup of Gold* to add to the tragic and emotional intensity of the scenes or to introduce unconventional ideas about sex. For example, the scenes of war, quarrels and crises are all represented rather than narrated. His concept of a 'free woman' is introduced through the dialogue of Henry Morgan and Coeur de Gris. But the most important narrative technique used in this novel is 'impressionistic' technique. This is a necessary device to project the psychological reality or the working of the mind and consciousness of his characters. It is particularly used towards the end of the novel when in spite of outward integration, the forces of disintegration are at work in the mind and soul of Henry Morgan; "Sir Henry was staring at the ceiling. For an hour he had been puzzled with this mysterious ceiling. Nothing

supported it in the middle. Why did it not fall? It was late" ⁵⁰ And the picture of his wife being modified in his mind, "she is very near to God" and "It is terrifying to see a woman's soul shining through her eyes. So he was to die" ⁵¹ It is the picture of his inner hollowness, spiritual chaos, and psychological confusion—the fruit of his misguided ambition and misdirected energies. But the best scene showing the use of impressionistic technique is the war scene. In this scene, Steinbeck juxtaposes the outer and the inner scenes. For example, when Henry Morgan shouts to his soldiers, "Throw down the walls! Let no two stones stand together!" There follows in brackets the scene of a woman which impinges on his mind, (There is a woman in the Cup of Gold and she is lovely as the sun)." Again he cries, "then put his feet in the fire- why, he is a brazen fool! Break his arms! —He will not tell? Put the whip cord about his temples! —Oh, kill him! Kill him and stop his screaming—Perhaps he had no money.' And this is juxtaposed with, "(there is a woman in Panama-)", which finds completion after the second command "kill the prisoners!" to "(-She is lovely as the sun)" and again with "(La Santa Roja is in Panama)". ⁵² On the whole, the narrative method is direct and in the third person. Steinbeck does not enter the novel by way of a character a commentator or a reporter. However, his narrative techniques in this novel are in the experimental stage, which were to become some of the finest in his art of fiction in his later works.

To a God Unknown marks the next stage of development of his prose style and narrative style. The author directly moves on to acquaint the reader with the hero, Joseph Wayne, and his place in the clan and the society, his journey from his homeland to the West and his future growth. It is clear that in this novel the author remained occupied to the end with the personality and consciousness of Joseph Wayne. The result of that there is nothing—objects, images, symbols, descriptions, deliberation, scenes and characters—that does not directly or indirectly contribute to the evolution and emergence of this central character from a mere farmer to a prophet of his new faith. Every incident from the copulation of the cows and bulls to the falling of the rains, from the death of Elizabeth to Joseph's adultery with Rama, is made a part of our and Joseph's understanding and knowledge of the basic unity of life. There is nothing in the novel that can be called superfluous. Steinbeck's economy of language is remarkable and the whole novel seems to be a single organism. There is not a single loose thread or digression in the novel. Joseph's consciousness is made central to the whole fabric and Steinbeck performs difficult task of the author performing a kind of strict literary ritual.

The story is told in the third person, but this time it is told more in terms of communicative experience than in terms of sequential chain of events. Experience is communicated through an entry into the consciousness of Joseph, his emotional, philosophical and mystical

feelings and visions, coupled with delicately drawn pictures of natural objects and natural phenomena, animals and the land with its possibility of changing from barrenness into fertility and vice-versa. Man and nature are seen to be inseparable, and the changes in the land and the seasons are dependant on the inner, moral and spiritual condition of man. This makes the use of symbolic imagery necessary. The descriptive paragraphs about nature and natural scenes are made an integral part of the whole scheme of the novel. For example; "The Winter came in early that year... The black birds swarmed and flew away in twinkling clouds... The frost came in to the valley of Our Lady one night and burned the willows yellow and the dogwood red"⁵³ Nature is made to be playing its phenomenal role within and outside his characters. Peter Lisca observes;

Frequently in his works Steinbeck interrupts the flow of his narrative to insert a descriptive passage, often set off as a paragraph, depicting some predatory incident in nature. An owl may be seen pouncing on a rodent, a hawk striking a rabbit...Always, they throw light on the moral structure of that ultimate reality with which man is consanguineous—Nature.⁵⁴

Symbols and symbolic imagery make the novel a great work of art and yet they are nowhere forced or deliberately introduced. Language, sentence-structure, words and other lingual expressions modify themselves according to the communicative system aiming at representing experience in whatever form it takes in the mind of

Joseph, Elizabeth, Rama and other characters. Style is free from inflexibility, rigidity, and mannerism. The largest number of images are derived from nature, common-day life and Christian theology. To A God Unknown shows the maturing powers of Steinbeck as a great literary artist.

The Pastures of Heaven is Steinbeck's experiment in telling the whole story in the form of a sequence of independent stories which also form a part of a single pattern. All the stories are about the life of people in the valley, constituting a certain social order. But they are so organized that in each story the Munroes figure in one way or the other and bring each story to its completion. The Pastures of Heaven, however, is not a novel because many stories in it are to a great extent autonomous in structure. Each story, however, is made to throw light on one aspect of the social structure, its harmony and its subsequent disharmony. The volume is significant in providing the novelist the opportunity to study and write the smallest psychological, and social event that in its ultimate effect causes significant breakdowns. The author has gained greater power of controlling and ordering his materials. The tone and tenor of a potential humorist also seems to begin intermittently in this volume.

Tortilla Flat is a work of an extremely cautious artist. F.W. Watt observes that Steinbeck "was fully preoccupied with the novelist's craft and somewhat concerned with the immediate reactions of readers and

critics to Tortilla Flat".⁵⁵ The fact is that his Cup of Gold and To A God Unknown had not invoked favorable criticism. This made him more conscious about his future works. The mock Arthurian saga of the poor paisanos marks the end of his literary apprenticeship. It is written in a mock-epic style employing the whole paraphernalia of mock-epic devices. The story is narrated in the third person by the author and the episodic structure of The Pastures of Heaven is retained to 'grow into novel', further including 'interchapters'. There is use of a dignified expression for the exploits of Danny and his friends, King Arthur and his knights of the Round Table and their heroic exploits are down-scaled; ironic parallels and ironic contrasts are increasingly used and ironic tone is maintained throughout. Peter Lisca points out that

mock-epic tone is also obvious in the chapter headings; ... Within the narrative itself, this spirit is sustained by the author's occasional interruptions; ... As in the speech of Hemingway ... part of the effect results from translating the foreign idiom directly into English. Steinbeck, however, relies less than Hemingway on direct translation alone, often recreating in English the very accents of the characters' speech.⁵⁶

The learned critic further points out that the function of language is very crucial in Tortilla Flat.

The Long Valley, like The Pastures of Heaven, is a collection of stories and its episodic structure highlights Steinbeck's love of the short-story form. The Long Valley shows that these stories represent

wide range of techniques and subject matter. Each story has a complex structure in that it does not yield its meaning or even its theme easily. Under the explicit surface meaning, there is embedded at the symbolic and deeper level the implicit and deliberately unarticulated story of the characters' emotional, psychological and sexual proclivities. That constitutes Steinbeck's story in essence. All verbal and lingual expressions seem at times to be inadequate to express the essential experience conveyed. *The Snake*, *The White Quail* and *Chrysanthemums* exemplify the author's style of casting the essentials of his materials into stories and doing away with much of the inessential materials. In this respect, he is modern in his art of storytelling. The narrative art in these stories brings out Steinbeck's main concern with reality as it takes shape in the mind of his characters and the experience they have. We also find here a symbolic juxtaposition of the inner and outer landscapes. The inner state of Pepe in *Flight* is paralleled with his meeting the wild animals in their descending order, the well-made and maintained garden of Mary Teller is paralleled with her self-imposed sexual repression and egotistic sense of purity. Sometimes experience is communicated through the flight and physical death of an animal like the mare in *The Promise*. Incidents function as significant means of communication such as the words, "Jody ... the buzzards didn't kill the Pony. Don't you know that?"⁵⁷ spoken by Carl Tiffin in *the Gift*. Again the death of red pony is associated with

violence, pain and disgust in *The Promise*. The style of the stories in *The Long Valley* is perfectly suited to their theme and subject-matter. What strikes the reader on reading *In Dubious Battle* is almost the total absence of descriptions of nature, repeatedly met with in his earlier works. He develops a matter-of-fact prose style in his treatment of the theme of struggle between the labourers and the employers. This kind of prose style was necessitated by the realistic treatment of the struggle and the group-man theory. But still, the style does not jar the reader's sensibility. As a narrator, Steinbeck takes an objective and detached position. It is through the dramatic technique that the reader is brought into direct contact with the characters' mind. The characters reveal themselves only through speech and physical gestures and movements. Peter Lisca remarks, "Steinbeck's 'cold' prose and his dramatic presentation are important techniques for driving a wedge of objectively not only between the author and his artifact, but also between the artifact and its audience".⁵⁸ Besides, Steinbeck introduces Doc Burton, who represents non-teleological thinking. Through him, Steinbeck introduces his theory of group-man and the biological theory of man; "A man in a group isn't himself at all, he's a cell in an organism... May be group-man gets pleasure when individual men are wiped out in a war"⁵⁹ Steinbeck also introduces his knowledge of marine biology and natural laws to make *In Dubious Battle* a modern work of art.

Of Mice and Men was written in the play form. Peter Lisca points out that whereas in In Dubious Battle,

the personalized protagonists were easily absorbed into a greater pattern because that pattern was physically present, ... in Of Mice and Men the protagonists are projected against a very thin background and must suggest or create this larger pattern through their own particularity. To achieve this, Steinbeck makes use of language, action, and symbol as recurring motifs. All three of these motifs are presented in the opening scene, are contrapuntally developed the story, and come together again at the end.⁶⁰

These three motifs build up a strong pattern of inevitability. The book attests Steinbeck's greater control and power of organization of his materials into a well-made fictional and thematic structure. The story begins with the pursuit of George and Lennie for the fulfillment of their dream and comes full circle when the dream is shattered, Lennie is killed and George returns all alone.

The Grapes of Wrath is a very ambitious work. It deals with the journey of the migrant labourers from the dust-bowl to California, their sufferings and their tortuous existence there. It is a very significant record of Steinbeck's attitude and of human conditions which were to be used as materials for his great novels. The extremes of poverty, suffering, depression and injustice are vividly depicted in The Grapes of Wrath. In a sense he was hoping that the projection of the microcosm will define the outlines of the macrocosm. As a result of seeing so

much suffering, his tone has come down from satire to compassion. He puts on the tone of a down-right realistic writer in his narration of the story of human suffering. He gives factual details including psychological and sociological actions and reactions. The materials of the novel presented the difficult problem of structure, so he had to include philosophical interchapters concerned with The Great Depression. The interchapters perform the function of presenting the social background to enlarge the pattern of action represented by the Joad family. Then there are intercalary chapters (19,21,25) that provide historical information regarding the development of land- ownership in California and the emergence of the migrant labour. Throughout the sixteen inter-chapters are found scattered, occasional paragraphs which present the philosophy or message to which the modern situation gives rise. The novel shows that there is a general correspondence between the material of each intercalary chapter and material of current narrative portion. The chapter that deals with the migrant's life on the highway lies interspersed with the narrative of the Joads' journey. The novel ends with the description of the rain and the flood in the last intercalary chapter. The novel is a triumph of fictional art. The interchapters are closely integrated into a total structure along with an intricate interweaving of specific details. Peter Lisca observes: "Every chapter is locked into the book's narrative portion by specific cross-reference, which amplifies the Joads' typical actions to the dimensions

of a communal experience”⁶¹ According to Joseph Warren Beach, each speaker in the novel is like ‘the chorus in a Greek Tragedy’⁶² The novel shows Steinbeck’s command of prose- style. Symbols and symbolic images such as of the turtle, the dog, the flood, the rain and the dust give thematic and structural organization to the novel. Images of colours; red, grey, green, ink, white, brown are used to symbolize the state of degeneration of growth both of the earth and of human characters. Peter Lisca demonstrates the similarity between the language of the Old Testament and Steinbeck’s prose style in this novel and comments that “the parallel grammatical structure of parallel meanings, the simplicity of diction, the balance, the concrete details, the summery sentences, the reiterations- all are here ... Except for the terms of machinery, the passage might be one of the Psalms”⁶³ The novel certainly marks Steinbeck’s achievement as an artist with command over style and language and the skill of organizing chaotic and disparate materials into an organic structure.

Sea of Cortez is not a piece of fiction but a ‘leisurely journal of informal speculation.’ It is a scientific book in which his language has the economy, appropriateness and exactness of a scientific work. It is loaded with scientific terminology. Biological, zoological and physiological terms are woven into the narrative. Though Sea of Cortez is not a work of pure fiction, it has a kind of fictional mode of narration. It is important from another point of view also-the point of

view of objectivity, which dispenses with preconceptions and conclusions. A kind of thinking 'technique', or 'non-teleological technique is developed. What the non-teleological thinker really experiences, according to Steinbeck, is not a loss of feeling or emotion, but an 'immense expansion'. The book is full of analogies between human and animal life. Sea imagery is abundantly employed.

Cannery Row further illustrates Steinbeck's use of non-teleological theory of writing. The narrative has a wide sweep and converges on the central character, Doc. Doc is himself a scientific, technical and detached person. The tone adopted is at times satirical, particularly when the diseased society of Cannery Row comprising of 'tigers with ulcers' and 'blind jackals' is contrasted with Mac and the boys. His treatment of Dora and her Bear Flag Restaurant is again an example of objective writing. The author does not walk into the book to pass comments. The book is free from personal judgment. It is not only that Steinbeck suspends his judgement, even the reader gains nothing more than an ambivalent view of life in this book.

By the time Steinbeck came to write The Pearl in 1945, he had grown into a very mature artist and a great story-teller. He now succeeds in creating a microcosm out of a single incident which he had heard about an Indian boy who had found a pearl of great size by accident. He transforms this incident into a parable, modifies the thematic pattern and imbues it with symbolic meaning. The Pearl is

created as a symbol of temptation, but the symbolism is very close to realism. Throughout the novel, the external shape of the broken landscape and the internal psychological landscape of Kino are artistically juxtaposed. The sea- short with all its sea- imagery is made to stand for the lust, sense of possession and selfishness of Kino. Animal imagery in the novel is employed to function as suggestive of the evil within and without Kino. The parabolic design of *The Pearl* is given the dimension of a credible human adventure. The prose style is flexible which serves both as a technique and a powerful medium of expression. Objectivity in narration is carefully maintained almost to the level of a camera capturing both the minute and the broad details.

The Wayward Bus has a complex structure and technique and has an equally complex level of meaning. The whole story of the fall, of the fallen, and of "on the way to redemption" is narrated in the complex way of putting an assortment of characters in a bus. The bus and the characters, the representatives of humanity, are deliberately made 'wayward'. The pattern is both artistic and symbolic. The journey from one place to the other in a wayward manner is made to stand for the journey of humanity from the dead past through the present towards the future. The bus is got stuck and this fact is used as a device to provide an opportunity for the dramatic revelation of each character from Van Brunt to John Chicoy. Unlike many of Steinbeck's novels. *The Wayward Bus* is related to action on the level of characters rather than

on the level of events. Its prose style is highly developed and dexterous. Scientific objectivity is brought to a point of further distinction as an artistic technique. Each sentence lights up step by step the scene and the characters, and the whole picture is built up in the style of a deft painter. Very much like a movie camera, there is a close-up, and then the broad background in which the action takes place. Peter Lisca observes: "this kind of camera-eye' realism is used throughout, except for brief passages of omniscient narration in which author fills in the historical background of his characters" ⁶⁴

Burning Bright, a play novelette, is said to be a failure. And according to Peter Lisca: "It is the failure of language" ⁶⁵ Its failure of language is attributed to the novelist's effort to forge and use 'a kind of universal language'. Steinbeck himself wrote that it was not to sound like "ordinary speech, but rather by rhythm, sound, and image to give the clearest and best expression" ⁶⁶ But in spite of his best intentions and attempts, Burning Bright failed because of the weakness of language, a language less convincing and less credible with reference to the characters using it.

East of Eden and The Winter of Our Discontent are the fruit of Steinbeck's maturity as an untiring experimenter, innovator, and literary artist. In these two novels the narrative art consists mainly in telling a number of parallel stories, which coalesce into one. East of Eden is embedded in the story of the fall and the rise of man in the

contextual framework of *The Bible*, the Christian and non-Christian philosophy and theology. *The Winter of Our Discontent* contains the Biblical, literary (Shakespearean) and spiritual story of the fall and the redemption of Man. It covers the New Testament just as *East of Eden* covers the Old Testament. *East of Eden* is also Steinbeck's triumph of the art of structural design and complicated, epic-like fabric. The moral philosophy in the form of the story is brought out by narrating the story of three generations. The book begins with the personal family saga with strong Biblical overtones. Steinbeck's greatness lies in his handling and ordering his diverse material in a cohesive and meaningful structural frame. The scale of the novel is enlarged to epic dimensions. The language, therefore, is also distanced from common-day language in keeping with the epic demands of the novel. The passages of pure description are not many because the story is told more in terms of human nature distanced from nature and natural way of life. In *The Winter of our Discontent*, the novelist once again turns to story of Man in terms of the Biblical pattern interpreted in the modern conceptual and contextual framework. The narrative pattern runs smoothly with occasional forays into the Biblical and symbolism of good Friday and the Passion of Christ is interwoven with the fictional narrative which tells the story of a modern Christian, Ethan Hawley. Steinbeck also makes use of the tarot cards in this novel which is compared to the use of tarot cards in Eliot's "Wasteland". The tarot

card is associated with the Hanged Man. Steinbeck takes pains to ensure that the reader understands what positions the Hanged Man is in when the card is placed in the table. When Margie views the Hanged Man, the card is in an upright position showing the man suspended upside down by the foot which indicates that Ethan will experience a period of sacrifice, submission, suffering and punishment. This symbolistic technique adds to the power of the novel by giving it a larger number of possible interpretations. Steinbeck also uses parallels from the past to emphasize the course of temptations, trials and salvation in the life of man. First of all, there are parallels drawn from the New Testament, the Crucifixion and the Ressurection of Christ, which is seen on a spiritual level. Another paralled is drawn from Shakespeare's Richard III. Like Richard, Ethan is determined to betray friends who had perfect trust in him, which starts the tortuous process of his moral downfall. The third parallel concerns the psychological level- his psychological dilemma in the face of temptations and trials. In this respect Ethan becomes every man. Steinbeck also makes a very effective use of other images and symbols such as the talisman, sea-shore, the cave and secret places.

Steibeck once wrote:

My experience in writing has followed an almost invariable pattern.

Since by the process of writing a book I have outgrown that book,

and since I like to write, I have not written two books alike ... if a

writer likes to write, he will find satisfaction in endless experimentation with his medium—techniques, arrangements of scenes, rhythms of words, rhythms of thought.⁶⁷

Right from the first to the last novel, there is a consistent development in his prose style, in his structural designs, his symbology and his narrative patterns. He never repeats himself. There is a continuous and consistent growth in his conscious craftsmanship which makes him a singular writer among the writers of his generation and assures a permanent place for him in the world of American literature. His narrative technique in the final analysis is nearest to the natural expression of life in all its manifestations.

Steinbeck speaks to us with special immediacy because in a curious way he anticipated attitudes toward the human experience which have particularly engaged the intelligences of the young in recent years. Many of Steinbeck's characters seem to have been the forebears of the rebels who have gathered in centers of protest from Greenwich village to Haight-Ashbury district of San Francisco. What can the dissidents of Tortilla Flat, Cannery Row, and Sweet Thursday be called but dropouts from society who have the same reasons for rejecting old patterns of belief as do members of the hippie generation? On the negative side the credo of today's young revolutionaries seems, like that of Steinbeck, to have been influenced by a pervasive disillusionment with the gospel of success, by contempt for what seems

to them to be cynical commercialism, and by resentment of arbitrary authority. On the positive side, as their banners insist, they wish to be guided-again as were the group conscious residents of Cannery Row- by a preference for love over the destructive impulses of human nature. Steinbeck accepted as early as the 1930's the obligation to take a stand in his writing against tendencies in the American way of life to which the campus rebels of the present have been making vigorous objection.

More than this, Steinbeck never forgot the crucial character of the confrontation between man and his destiny. In the least sober of his books, Sweet Thursday, he slipped in a statement which succinctly sets forth his own fundamental belief:

Men seem to be born with a debt they can never pay no matter how hard they try. It piles up ahead of them. Man owes something to man. If he ignores the debt it poisons him, and if he tries to make payments the debt only increases, and the quality of his gift is the measure of the man.⁶⁸

The novels, plays and short stories of this conscientious artist represent successive efforts to pay his dept to man. Wide in the range of their interests, diverse in mood, passionately concerned in their sympathies, they all celebrate the worth of man. For that integrity Steinbeck demands justice and respect; to that integrity he lends the support of his own conviction that all men everywhere are and must be inextricably identified with their kind. Much more clearly than in the instance of any other American writer of his time, Steinbeck's

consistent effort to establish the dignity of human life offers the measure of the man.

Examples of his verbal skill reveal the secret of his method which was to make the simplest words and phrases flash into significance with seeming spontaneity. The quality of patience in one of his characters is established by use of the graphic simile "as enduring as a sea-washed stone"⁶⁹ When he describes a woman as being "humorless as chicken" one immediately sees the skittering and hears the feeble, repetitive complaints of a creature ridiculously, yet pathetically, at war with a frustrating environment. The same genius of making pictures of mental attitudes reveals itself in the suggestion that the mind of another character- a Chinese shopkeeper who has forever to protect himself against the connivers of Cannery Row- picked its way as delicately as cat through cactus"⁷⁰ One of Steinbeck's many eager digesters of experience defines himself unforgettably when he says, "I eat stories like grapes"⁷¹ As easily recognizable as an elderly female relative of one's own is the woman who has "a collection of small round convictions." The idiot in the story "Johnny Bear" has only one interest in life which is to cadge drinks at a bar; he keeps reiterating the sounds "Whiskey.... Whis-key", as Steinbeck says, "like a bird call."⁷² By such small touches Steinbeck quickens his men and women into life.

Steinbeck is equally successful with metaphor in creating landscape. Every reason when he is drenching rains came at last to his

valley, the land, Steinbeck is inspired to say, "would shout with grass."⁷³ A solitary visitor to a pool frequented by frogs remembers that "the air was full of their song and it was a kind of roaring silence".⁷⁴ The modest poetry of surprise leaps out of such phrases as it does even more strikingly in descriptions of wild weather. An observer is warned of an approaching storm when he sees "a black cloud eating up the sky."⁷⁵ In another such moment "a bristling, officious wind raked the valley."⁷⁶ The device of making pictures of doleful situations is used to underscore tragedy: "Poverty sat cross-legged on the farm."⁷⁷ Mood is established, the nature of man defined, drama propelled by verbal devices so skillfully suited to their purpose as to be almost unnoticeable in themselves. Yet unobtrusive as these inspirations, are they haunt the memory of the reader ever after.

According to Chaplin, Steinbeck would work in the morning, producing about two thousand words a day. The manuscripts he showed to Chaplin were remarkable for their neatness and bore few corrections. Steinbeck's manuscripts are indeed undeniable unworked over in appearance and, as one reads them, one's first reaction is one of astonishment that these are the texts which, untouched, eventually found their way into print. Nothing could be further from the truth. If one carefully compares the manuscripts with the published texts, it becomes apparent that, although they are essentially identical in overall concept, they are vastly different in the detail of their composition.

Such comparison reveals that Steinbeck's prose style — which at times seems almost disarmingly spontaneous and casual, and which at its best is clear, simple, vivid, and immediate, possessing a subtle and distinctive rhythm which makes the reading of it such a satisfying aesthetic experience — achieves its most effective expression only by the application of iron artistic discipline and a great amount of detailed revision.

"I write because I like to write," Steinbeck told a British interviewer in 1965. "I find joy in the texture and tone and rhythm of words. It is a satisfaction like that which follows good and shared love."⁷⁸ By then, of course, Steinbeck had been for many years criticized—sometimes justly, but more often unjustly—for the increasingly wooden manner of his writing. It cannot be denied that, viewed as a body, the postwar work Steinbeck published is markedly inferior, stylistically as well as in other respects, to the work he produced up to 1939. Basically, Steinbeck was an instinctive writer, in that his best work is that which apparently was initially conceived and committed to paper in a white-hot burst of creative energy. There is some evidence to suggest that *The Grapes of Wrath* may have been the first book he had really to struggle over and that he never wholly recovered from the experience.⁷⁹ One also gets the impression time and time again, that while Steinbeck is always fully in control of his material in the first two-thirds of some of his full-length works, he

tends to lose a certain scenes of proportion and rushes through the final section almost as if he has become impatient to get this current work out of the way and behind him, already fixing his sights on the project that is to follow.⁸⁰

A writer's creative processes always make for rewarding study, and we are fortunate indeed to have Journal of a Novel: The East of Eden Letters (1969) which affords some fascinating glimpse into Steinbeck's working methods on one of his major books. The journal does not provide us with the whole story, however, for it covers only that period during which Steinbeck commenced and completed the initial manuscript draft of the novel. Steinbeck's own comments on the work in progress indicate that, as apparently with all his work, the overall plan of East of Eden remained fundamentally unchanged in its metamorphosis from manuscript to published book. The facsimile of the first page of the original manuscript, reproduced as an endpaper to the first trade edition of Journal of a Novel, illustrates, on the other hand, how the prose has undergone a subtle, although occasionally radical, process of transmutation. The instinctive prose of these opening passages, near perfect in itself and poured out in a sort of creative orgasm, has been considered and reconsidered, molded in a variety of different ways to obtain the desired precise effect, pruned, expanded, rearranged to give smoothness of tone and of narrative line. As Steinbeck himself avowed:

... [*East of Eden*] is going to be much more carefully written than anything I have ever done. This book is very important to me. I am going to do no going back until the whole is completed but then it is going to be overhauled very very deeply. I shall insist on that.⁸¹

This process of deep overhauling, carried out during the nine or ten months which elapsed between the completion of the manuscript and the publication of the book in September 1952, is not recorded in *Journal of a Novel*. A publicity handout issued by Steinbeck's publishers, the Viking Press, in 1954, however, gives a useful picture of the intensive program of revision Steinbeck devoted to all his work, although it is possible that this is not exactly the method he used when working on *East of Eden*.

His first draft is always written in pencil, the sentences marching across the pages in surprising, neat, close-drill lines. When several chapters have been set down he reads from the manuscript into a tape recorder, and a stenographer makes a typed copy from the tape, on which he then makes his revisions. When the revised draft is complete it is retyped and he does a final reworking of it, after which a last typescript is made and sent off to ... his publishers.⁸²

As Malcolm Cowley has observed, " diction is an essential part of the process, because what Steinbeck writes is a spoken prose." ⁸³ Cowley's observation is a valid one. Steinbeck always saw his role as a writer as an extension of the role of the storyteller of yore seated in a circle of men around a campfire. His prose retains the natural rhythms of speech, while maintaining the visual flow of words on the printed page. It has

the directness and the simplicity of the born storyteller's art. Steinbeck eschewed obscurity in writing. "It is so hard to be clear," he once wrote. "Only a fool is willfully obscure."⁸⁴ He admired Adlai Stevenson for his "clear, clean writing," insisting that a man "cannot think muddled and write clear."⁸⁵ Stevenson's prose style was one reason, and obviously a very valid reason at that, why Steinbeck so wholeheartedly supported the senator's presidential campaign.

Steinbeck's dialogue, although sometimes a little mannered (as in *Of Mice and Men*) is not all literary as is, for example, that of Hemingway. Hemingway's dialogue reads well on the page, but when read aloud often tends to sound painfully artificial. The conversation between the lovers Frederick Henry and Catherine Barkley at the end of Chapter 19 of *A Farewell to Arms* is supremely effective on the page, creating atmosphere and foreshadowing the novel's tragic conclusion, but put into the mouths of actors it emerges rather pretentious, even ludicrous. Steinbeck's dialogue (except that in *Burning Bright*) is never artificial or pretentious when translated into the spoken idiom, and this, as correlative to the masterly storytelling, surely accounts largely for the success of the films which have been from Steinbeck's works.

With *Of Mice and Men* Steinbeck devised the experimental play-novelette form, "an attempt," as he himself explained, "to write a novel that could be played from the lines, or a play that could be read.... The fact that this experiment was a failure, however is no proof

that such a book as I had wished to write cannot be written. I thoroughly intend to try it again."⁸⁶ Steinbeck indeed wrote two more of these play-novelettes, The Moon Is Down and Burning Bright. The three books follow the basic construction of a stage play, the narrative at beginning of each chapter corresponding to the stage setting which precedes each scene of a play, detailed in description, partly expository in nature, and providing wherever necessary potted case histories of the characters (see, in particular, the opening of Chapter 2 of The Moon Is Down). As novels, they fail because their action is governed by the need to follow stage techniques, which in addition to imposing severe restrictions on the construction of the books, also raises occasional questions of credibility as undiluted theatricality keeps breaking through.⁸⁷ Similarly, Of Mice and Men and The Moon is Down are not the artistic successes they could have been as stage plays because their intrinsic realism does not adapt altogether well to the traditional play form that Steinbeck uses, calling for a far more flexible and experimental theatrical medium in which to operate. Undoubtedly, although Steinbeck dubbed it "a failure," Of Mice and Men is the most accomplished of the play-novelettes. As an art form, the genre became progressively less successful. Of Burning Bright, little needs be said. Even Steinbeck conceded: "I guess I was wrong but I'm still glad I did it."⁸⁸

Steinbeck's works are, as already indicated, more faithfully served by translation into the cinematic medium, which has both the breadth and the flexibility, unavailable on the stage, to give a fully unrestricted and effective interpretation. It is generally agreed, for instance, that *The Moon Is Down* made a far better film than it did a play. In fact, much of Steinbeck's work seems to have been conceived in quasicinematic terms; the rapid succession of scenes, the panoramic expanses narrowing down to the specific detail, the unconventional viewpoint (e.g. the turtle in *The Grapes of Wrath*, the gopher in *Cannery Row*, and the fly in *The Wayward Bus*). It is not surprising that Steinbeck had a deep and abiding interest in films and film-making. The opening paragraphs of Chapter 27 of *East of Eden* provide an excellent example of this quasi cinematic technique: the preliminary bird's-eye-view of the Salinas River, the camera zooming down to dwell on the rabbit sitting quietly on the bank, the cinematic shock of the arrow transfixing the creature, and then the camera view again widening, but only marginally, to encompass the world of the young Trask twins and to set the narrative under way once more.

Patently cinematic, too, is the opening paragraph of the novel *In Dubious Battle*:

At last it was evening. The lights in the street outside came on, and the neon restaurant sign on the corner jerked on and off, exploding its hard red light in the air. Into Jim Nolan's room the sign threw a

soft red light. For two hours Jim had been sitting in a small, hard rocking-chair, his feet up on the white bedspread. Now that it was quite dark, he brought his feet down to the floor and slapped the sleeping legs. For a moment he sat quietly while waves of itching rolled up and down his calves; then he stood up and reached for the unshaded light. The furnished room lighted up — the big white bed with its chalk-white spread, the golden-oak bureau, the clean red carpet worn through to a brown warp.⁸⁹

The sleazy hotel or rooming- house bedroom with the neon signflashing on and off outside the window has now become a movie cliché, but Steinbeck here uses the setting with masterly literary effect. The very first sentence of the book creates a sense of immediacy, so that the reader feels himself impelled headlong into the story.⁹⁰ The obvious sense of overwhelming relief experienced by Jim that evening has arrived and the fact that he does not move from his chair until it is completely dark establishes, without any explanation being necessary, the possible fugitive nature of his circumstances. The austere, almost journalistic, style in which this paragraph and the whole book is written reflects the unrelenting world in which the characters exist, the unwavering didactic determination of the leading protagonists, the manifestations of violence which erupt again and again as a result of the situations coldly and deliberately engineered by the strike leaders in the Torgas Valley. This is Steinbeck's prose at its most uncompromising, simple in vocabulary and syntactic construction,

stripped down to the bare essentials in almost every way, devoid of purple patches, but containing those frequent and, as always, poetically vivid observations of nature:

The afternoon sun glanced on the tops of apple trees and then broke into stripes and layers of slanting light beneath the heavy branches, and threw blots of sunshine on the ground. The wide aisles between the trees stretched away until the rows seemed to meet in a visual infinity. ⁹¹

It is a considerable advance on the rich, complex, literary prose, replete with personifications and metaphoric allusions, that Steinbeck was writing only a few years earlier in Cup of Gold:

The sun cut itself on a sharp hill and bled into the valleys. Long shadows of the peaks crept out into the fields like stalking grey cats.

⁹²

This somewhat overwrought prose of Steinbeck's first book spills over into To a God Unknown, the next book Steinbeck was to write, although the third in order of publication, following The Pastures of Heaven. In To A God Unknown, however, he succeeded in keeping the riot of metaphors more under control and indeed, where they are used, having regard to the essentially pantheistic nature of the work, they tend to seem less unashamedly literary than they were in Cup of Gold, being here firmly integrated into the book's emotional and philosophic patterns. In To a Gold Unknown there can already be detected the beginnings of Steinbeck's mature prose style. It is also interesting to

note that most of the stories ultimately collected in The Long Valley were written around this time, for some of these stories, especially the four which comprise The Red Pony cycle, contain arguably the best prose that Steinbeck ever wrote.

The Red Pony has often been termed a children's book, but it is certainly much more than that. It epitomizes all that Steinbeck desired to achieve in his writing, in that, on one hand, with its unsophisticated language and compelling narrative, it is a work which children can readily identify with and unreservedly enjoy on their own level, while on the other hand, with its wonderful evocation of childhood, its sharp and lovely observations of nature and its incisive explorations into the working of the human psyche, it is a work that holds deep meaning and wisdom for the adult reader.

Steinbeck's unwasteful but vibrant style of those years is ideally suited to the short story medium and it is to be regretted that the magazine editors of the early 1930s apparently did not recognize his considerable talent in the genre. Had they done so, we may now have many more stories equal in distinction to those in The Long Valley. By the time Steinbeck again began writing short stories after the end of World War II his mature style had begun to disintegrate and those stories he did publish are little more than a pale reflection of the gems he published during the pre-war years.

Despite the danger of perhaps over-simplifying a thesis, it can be suggested that the development of Steinbeck's prose style after To a God Unknown is traceable with some fair consistency through The Pastures of Heaven, The Long Valley stories, In Dubious Battle and Of Mice and Men. With The Grapes of Wrath, that flawed masterpiece which is surely Steinbeck's greatest achievement, a sort of disintegration paradoxically does set in. As Peter Lisca has pointed out, "No other American novel has succeeded in forging and making instrumental so many prose styles."⁹³ Lisca identifies two principal styles: the first redolent with Biblical resonances and the second echoing the harsh, staccato dissonances of the contemporary American scene, complete with what (for want of a better term) I shall call onomatopoeic rhythms, as, for example, in the square dance sequence in Chapter 23. The books subsequent to The Grapes of Wrath can be said to follow broadly these two stylistic courses: the psuedo- Biblical style, now much watered- down and sentimentalized, being continued in such works as The Moon Is Down, The Pearl, Burning Bright, and East of Eden, whilst the new and more abrasive style tends to predominate in Cannery Row, The Wayward Bus, Sweet Thursday, and The Winter of Our Discontent.

It is partly this overall uncertainty of style, with its increasing propensity toward imprecision of language⁹⁴ and its lack of strength in sustaining or compensating for the occasionally somewhat inadequately

expressed and structured philosophic content of his work, which accounts for the comparative failure of so many of Steinbeck's post-war books. It must be recognized and admitted that, apart from his compelling narrative genius, style was, in many respects, the principal force unifying Steinbeck's work. When he either lost the ability to reproduce the mature style of the thirties or, deliberately abandoned it, because of his insatiable desire to experiment his stature as a writer because of his insatiable desire to experiment, his stature as a writer became sadly but inevitably diminished.

It is an undisputed fact that many of Steinbeck's friends, neighbours, and acquaintances have had cause from time to time to be disturbed, shocked or even incensed by the thinly-disguised portraits he drew of them as characters in his fiction. One gets the impression that throughout his literary career Steinbeck relied, perhaps to a greater extent than most authors do, on real people and true-life happenings and situations to provide him with the characters and the plots for his novels and short stories. In his last novel, for instance, Ethan Hawley recalls the time when, as a boy, he lost the lace in church to another boy named Skunkfoot Hill, who subsequently became an anthropologist "somewhere in the west."⁹⁵ Five years after the publication of The Winter of Our Discontent, Steinbeck repeated the same story exactly in one of his Newsday "Letters to Alicia," this time purportedly as a factual episode in the author's own past. Steinbeck concludes this

ostensibly non-fictional account by relating how, many years after the incident, he met Skunkfoot Hill on a transcontinental train: "... I looked up from my book at a hauntingly familiar face. 'Bet you don't know me,' it said. 'Skunkfoot Hill?' I said. He retorted, 'Dr. Skunkfoot Hill, please.' Anthropologist, or some such vermin, he had become."⁹⁶ Illusion and reality: where is the dividing line? Without attempting to disguise them, Steinbeck made the members of his mother's family, the Hamiltons, leading characters in *East of Eden*, their real lives weaved into the fabric of the book and intermingled with the fictive lives of the Trasks. On one of two occasions, Steinbeck even briefly introduces his boyhood self as a character in the book. Significantly, the reader is left with the overall impression that the Hamiltons do indeed seem more real than do the Trasks.

This is not to suggest that Steinbeck was incapable of realizing a fully- fictionalized character, although obviously it is impossible for us, without intimate knowledge of those friends, neighbours and acquaintances of his, to be at all certain which of Steinbeck's characters are based on living persons (and how accurately so based) and which of them are purely the creation of his imagination. Because we have the proof of his own non-fictional writings, we can safely say, however, that many of his characters, and quite often those that impress themselves most strongly on the reader's mind, are based on actual Steinbeck either knew personally or had heard about, such as the

paisanos of Tortilla Flat, the Munroes of The Pastures of Heaven, and Johnny Bear from the story that bears his name. The most obvious example of all is, as has already been noted, the characters of Doc in Cannery Row and Sweet Thursday. As with the Hamiltons in East of Eden, there is very little attempt at disguise, and the portrait which Steinbeck draws of Ricketts in his valedictory essay, "About Ed Ricketts" is as true a portrait of Doc as the so-called fictional Doc is a portrait of Ricketts. As Steinbeck admits in his essay: "It is going to be difficult to write down the things about Ed Ricketts that must be written, hard to separate entities. And anyone who knew him would find it difficult. Maybe some of the events are imagined."⁹⁷ Again, one comes up against this fundamental ambivalence: illusion and reality, which is which? Ricketts also appears thinly disguised elsewhere in Steinbeck's fiction, as the young Dr. Phillips in the short story "The Snake," and as the somewhat mysterious Doc Burton in the novel In Dubious Battle.

Ricketts is not the only living person to make an appearance in fictive form in Cannery Row and the Pacific Biological Laboratory is not the only building transferred from reality into the pages of Steinbeck's novel. As Ray A. March, in his fascinating little guide to the present-day Cannery Row, has noted:

Dora, the community minded madam of the Bear Flag Restaurant, was also fashioned from the life of a real Cannery Row character.

Dora's contemporary in real life was Flora Woods, operator of the Bear Flag, sometimes known as the Lone Star, a one-time Cannery Row bordello.... Lee Chong's grocery is probably the most easily recognized. The name board is gone from the Chinese store, where Old Tennis Shoes whiskey could be bought for a few frogs, but the grocery is still present at 835 Cannery Row.... La Ida's like Doc's and Lee Chong's is real. The name is ever the same as in the novel. ⁹⁸

In exactly the same way, the whole of what is now popularly known as the "Steinbeck Country" provided Steinbeck with a rich and inexhaustible source of material for his books. The novels and short stories are redolent with descriptions of actual locales, sometimes given fictitious names, but more frequently identified by their real names; Salinas, Monterery, Carmel, Soledad, King City, Los Gatos, San Luis Obispo, Jolon, the Santa Lucia Mountains, the Gabilans, Pacific Grove—all are intensely evocative names to Steinbeck's readers.

One of the criteria of any fictive work is measured by the extent of success the author attains in establishing immediacy of contact with his reader. This contact can be expressed as a cerebral and emotional bridge linking the reader with the author's own unique view of life. In his finest work, Steinbeck, by some miraculous and seemingly casual and instinctive application of genius, establishes this immediacy of contact of a degree that few authors are able to achieve being unfolded on the printed page, intimately involved with the sights and smells and passions being described. It is a quasimystical experience, virtually

impossible to explain. Perhaps the nearest analogy is again that of the relationship subsisting between the enthralled listener and the born storyteller seated together at the campfire or before an open hearth on a winter's night in the candle-lit tap-room of some eighteenth or nineteenth century alehouse.

The analogy need not seem all that far-fetched. It should be remembered that from an early age Steinbeck nourished an intense interest in Arthurian romance, and he was continually acknowledging his indebtedness to Malory's great work, The Morte d'Arthur, for the profound influence it had both on his thinking and on his own writing.

As M.C. Bradbrook has noted:

Story-telling was the great art of the Middle Ages, and the Romance was a special form of this art. It was a long-continuing and popular form; the stories which Malory told were also in substance many hundreds of years old. They were ennobled by long tradition; they were, too, believed to be true history. But they represented at the same time an enlarged picture of contemporary life. This seems one way of defining the Romance. It gives an idealized version of the life of the knightly class. It is the warrior's day-dream, designed for recreation (or 'solace') not instruction (or 'doctrine') and representing the average sensual man's point of view.⁹⁹

This passage does, I would suggest, provide some indication of what, in one area at least, Steinbeck was endeavoring to accomplish in his fiction. It illuminates Steinbeck's ambivalent use of the real and the imaginary, explains perhaps the "average sensual man's point of view"

which he tends principally to adopt, and gives weight to his continual insistence that he wished to be read primarily for pleasure, although as a twentieth- century writer who arguably produced his finest work during the Depression era, it is perhaps too much to expect that he would avoid doctrinal issues altogether. Steinbeck sought to project the idealism of the chivalric code into the contemporary California scene, admittedly somewhat sentimentalizing it in the process and, almost paradoxically it seems, giving it its most potent and basic expression among the dropouts of *Tortilla Flat* and *Cannery Row*, Danny and Mack forming their own little conclaves in much the same manner as King Arthur established the brotherhood of the Round Table. It is in the light of such analogy that the series of "noble deeds" embarked upon by these latter-day California Knights of the Round Table (such as the rescuing of the Cortez family from starvation and the surreptitious planning of the surprise party for Doc, misdirected though these projects may sometimes prove to be with their unexpected and frequently disastrous side-effects) and the ruthless manner in which any member of the quasi-sacred circle is punished for misdemeanours against the group (the beating-up of Big Joe Portagee, for example) acquire a depth of meaning not immediately apparent from a superficial reading.

There are, however, let it be said, inherent dangers in attempting to extend the analogy too far, for one cannot altogether forget that

Danny and Mack and their respective companions, if not exactly members of the lowest stratum of society and loveable though Steinbeck may try to make them seem, are drunks, thieves, and wastrels and very low indeed down the social scale. It is clearly difficult, bearing this in mind, to identify them with the idealized figures of Malory's medieval heroes. There is little doubt, on the other hand, that the author himself entertained no such reservations and that Doc is echoing Steinbeck's own sentiments when he says, " ' ... Mack and the boys are healthy and curiously clean' ". Doc's observation parallels Brandbrook's statement that there is " something extraordinarily clean about Malory's world. Nearly all the knights are good..."¹⁰⁰

Nevertheless, adopting a somewhat broader view, the analogy between the *Morte d' Arthur* and Steinbeck's fiction can stand closer scrutiny. Here is Brandbrook again describing the world of Arthurian romance:

The characters in Romance are selected by age as well as class. They consist almost entirely of fighting men, their wives or mistresses, with an occasional clerk or an enchanter, a fairy or a fiend, a giant or a dwarf....There are very few old men or women, almost no infants or children. It is also a world in which family relationship, though they exist, are usually of comparatively little significance ... the relations of husband to wife is a feudal and not a personal one ... The deep relationships in this world are those of knight and vassal, or its mirror image of lady and lover; and of

these, the former is in Malory the most important, the last exhibiting the same virtue of fidelity which is more amply mirrored in the comradeship of arms. There is no doubt that even in the loves of Arthur, Lancelot and Guinevere, the masculine loyalties triumph.¹⁰¹

So it is too in Steinbeck's fictive world, predominantly male-orientated as it is, with its Henry Morgans, Jim Nolans, and Tom Joads fighting their way in that world for gain, for political belief or merely for survival; its Tularections, Johnny Bears and Lennie Smalls burdened with their physical and mental abnormalities and pathetically existing in a mainly uncaring society; and its occasional fiends, with Cathy Ames as the extreme larger-than-life example.

The theme of the intimate, yet ostensibly asexual, relationship which can exist between two men living temporarily in physical or psychological isolation away from the community is also peculiarly American. One can cite, as Leslie A. Fiedler does in Chapter XI of his *Love and Death in the American Novel* (1960), Natty Bumppo and Chingachgook in *The Deerslayer*, Ishmael and Queequeg in *Moby Dick*, and Huck and Jim in *Huckleberry Finn*. It is a theme which is constantly recurring in Steinbeck's fiction, from Henry Morgan and Coeur de Gris in *Cup of Gold* to Ethan Hawley and Danny Taylor in *The Winter Of Our Discontent*, although-unlike Cooper, Melville and Twain, and with the possible exception of Ramas and Willie in *To a God Unknown*—Steinbeck introduces no element of Platonic

miscegenation. In his book, Fiedler presents a case for detecting an element of latent homosexuality in these sort of relationships and it is worth noting that Steinbeck does in fact endow two all-male relationships (those of Henry Morgan and Coeur de Gris, and Mac and Jim Nolan) with somewhat deeper implications. Steinbeck provides clear evidence of Morgan's ambivalent sexual tastes again and again. We are told specifically at one point that Morgan "knew...how much he had come to love the young lieutenant, knew that he could not bear to lose [him]"¹⁰² The relationship comes to a violent end, when, shortly after his rejection by La Santa Roja, Morgan, in a moment of jealousy and self-disgust, shoots Coeur de Gris. Similarly throughout In Dubious Battle there are several indications that, as far as Mac is concerned, his feelings for Jim may not, after all, be entirely asexual in origin or intent. When eventually Jim accuses him; "You protect me all the time, Mac. And sometimes I get the feeling you're not protecting me for the Party, but for yourself"¹⁰³ Mac does not deny it, but turns away in confused anger.

From all accounts, both as a child and as a young man, Steinbeck was an omnivorous reader. He had the immense good fortune to be raised in a household in which the pick of the world's literature was readily available to him: the works of such British and European writers as Bunyan, Milton, Addison, Scott, Thackerey, George Eliot, Tolstoy, Dostoyevsky, Flaubert, Dickens, Robert Louis Stevenson and

Thomas Hardy, as well undoubtedly as the giants of nineteenth century American literature. Every writer consciously or unconsciously borrows from the writers who have preceded him, and in this Steinbeck was no exception. There is, of course, a certain inevitability about the process. In a study as brief as this, it is not possible to develop this line of investigation extensively. While it is perhaps offensive to speculate too freely about possible specific borrowings, two examples may be posited. There are, for instance, certain similarities between the opening image in the short story "The Chrysanthemums" of the winter fog sitting "like a lid on the mountains" and making "of the great valley a closed pot", and the initial-image of "the hollow stretch of whitish cloud shutting out the sky" which is "as a tent which had the whole heath for its floor" in The Return of the Native, Steinbeck's own favourite among Hardy's novels. In the same way, with the insistent repetition of the word "dust" in Chapter I of The Grapes of Wrath, Steinbeck employs the same literary device Dickens employs in the first chapter of Bleak House, with his equally obsessive use of the word "fog". Thus it can be said for certain that Steinbeck constantly throughout his literary career experimented with form and made every possible effort to ventilate his set-notions and large sweep of imagination in the best possible effective manner like a real creative artist.

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- 31- John Steinbeck, The Moon is Down (New York: Viking Press 1942), p.41.
- 32- Ibid., p.33.
- 33- John Steinbeck, In Dubious Battle (London : Pan Books, 1938), pp. 103-105.
- 34- Ibid., p. 230.
- 35- Ibid.
- 36- John Steinbeck. The Red Pony, p.91.
- 37- Cup of Gold, p.131.
- 38- To a God Unknown, p.20.
- 39- Ibid., p.22.
- 40- As the Captain in Cannery Row so feelingly observes: "My Wife is a Wonderful Woman ... Most Wonderful Woman. Ought to of been a man. If she was a man I wouldn't of married her"(CR, p.58.)

41- The Allens in "The Chrysanthemums," the Tellers in "The White Quail", the Randalls in "The Harness", and Mike and his wife in "The Vigilante" are all examples of men and women trapped in unhappy marriages in which the sexual element is either obviously or ostensibly almost non-existent. Certainly, in each case the marriage is childless.

42- Mark Spilka, "Of George and Lennie and Curley's Wife: Sweet Violence in Steinbeck's Eden," Modern Fiction Studies, 20 (Summer, 1974), 169-79.

43- Cup of Gold, p.65.

44- Ibid., p.70.

45- John Steinbeck, The Long Valley (London : Pan Books, 1975), p. 117.

46- Lisca, The Wide World of John Steinbeck, pp. 34-35.

47- Ibid., p.36.

48- Cup of Gold, p.28.

49- Ibid., p.157.

50- Ibid., p.153.

51- Ibid., p.154.

52- Ibid., p. 83.

53- To a God Unknown, pp. 93-94.

54- Lisca, The Wide World of John Steinbeck (New Brunswick, N.J. : Rutgers University Press, 1958), pp.53-54.

55- Watt, Steinbeck (New York : Oliber and Boyd., 1962), p.7.

56- The Wide World of John Steinbeck, p. 80.

57- The Red Pony, p. 35.

58- Lisca, The Wide World of John Steinbeck, p.118.

59- In Dubious Battle, pp. 104-105.

60- The Wide World of John Steinbeck, p.134.

61- Ibid., p.158.

62- Joseph Warren Beach, American Fiction, 1920-1940
(New York: Russell, 1960), pp.337-38.

63- The Wide World of John Steinbeck, pp. 161-62.

64- Ibid., p. 247.

65- Ibid., p.256.

66- Steinbeck, "Critics, Critics, Burning Bright," Saturday Review, Nov. 11, 1950, p.44.

67- Ibid., pp. 46-47.

68- James Gray, John Steinbeck (Minneapolis:University of Minnesota Press, 1971),p.7.

69- Ibid., p.39.

70- Ibid.,

71- Ibid..

72- Ibid..

73- Ibid..

74- Ibid., pp. 39-40.

75- Ibid., p.40.

76- Ibid.

77- Ibid.

78- Herbert Kretzmer, "Steinbeck's New Mood: I am Scared, Boastful but also Humble," Daily Express (January 15, 1965), p.6.

79- John Steinbeck, Working Days : The Journals Of The Grapes of Wrath, 1938-1941 (New York: Viking Press, 1989), p. 22

80- John Steinbeck. Journal of a Novel (New York : Viking Press, 1969), p.104.

81- Ibid., p.42.

82- "About John Steinbeck," News and Notes of Books and Bookmen (New York: Viking Press, 1954).

83- Malcolm Cowley, The Literary Situation (New York: Viking Press, 1958), p. 191.

84- "In Awe of Words," Exonian, 224 (March 3, 1954), 4.

85- Foreword to The Speeches of Adlai Stevenson, ed. Richard Harrity (New York: Random House, 1952), pp.7-8.

86- "The novel might benefit ...," Stage, (January, 1938), 50-51.

87- For Example, in Chapter 6 of The Moon is Down, Mollie Morden's house is visited one evening in rapid succession by Annie. Lieutenant Tonder, Mayor Orden, Dr. Winter, and the

Anders brothers, simply to comply with the scenic limitations and stage mechanics of the conventional play medium.

- 88- Journal of a Novel, p.205.
- 89- In Dubious Battle, p.1.
- 90- The Moon Is Down and The Pearl are other Steinbeck's longer works which have this opening element of immediacy. Steinbeck's novels, however, as a rule open in the traditional nineteenth century novelistic manner with extended descriptive and expository passages.
- 91- In Dubious Battle, p. 45.
- 92- Cup of Gold, p.20.
- 93- Lisca, The Wide World of John Steinbeck, p. 164.
- 94- Note, for instance, Steinbeck's frequent use of the imprecise noun "thing" in the opening pages of Chapter 2 of Cup of Gold, and his extensive and over excessive use of the same word throughout the whole of Chapter VIII of The Winter of Our Discontent.
- 95- The Winter of Our Discontent, pp.106-107.
- 96- "Letters to Alicia", Newsday, February 26, 1966. (n.p.)
- 97- The Log from the Sea of Cortez, p.x.
- 98- Ray March, A Guide to Cannery Row. (Monterey: Ray March, 1962), pp. 3.& 5.

99- M.C. Brandbrook, Sir Thomas Malory (London: Longmans, Green & Co. 1967), p. 11.

100- Ibid., p. 24.

101- Ibid., pp. 12-13.

102- Cup of Gold, p. 129.

103- In Dubious Battle, p. 246.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

John Steinbeck is indisputably one of the greatest American novelists. In the Noble Prize citation, he was eulogized as an "independent expounder of the truth with an unbiased instinct for what is genuinely American, be it good or wicked."¹ F.W. Watts has rightly said,

Like America itself, his work is a vast fascinating paradoxical universe: a brash experiment in democracy : a native quest for understanding at the level of the common man: a celebration of goodness and innocence: and display of chaos violence, corruption and decadence.²

He underwent a wide range of experiences during his life time. His was "a childhood soaked in impressions of fertile each, the mountains and fishing ports of California, sporadic study at Stanford University, the half enchanted work as a newspaper reporter as also odd jobs like, house-painter, fruit picker, surveyer, caretaker, filled the early decades of the man who at his death was a thrice married father of two children."³

It would appear uncommonly easy to lose one's sense of critical balance in discussing the work of John Steinbeck. Steinbeck has always invoked intense, arguably excessive loyalty in his supporters and contempt of varying degrees in his detractors. Possibly his artistic reputation has suffered as much, if not more, from this excessive show of loyalty, bordering at times on the verge of idolization, as it has from the barbed attacks of his critics. Taking the blanked view, we are forced to admit that, while Steinbeck is indisputably one of the greatest of twentieth-century American novelists, some of his work is incredibly bad, the style wooden, the content meretricious, the overall concept inadequate. To be fair to Steinbeck, however, this is

an assessment which could be as equally applied to some of the work of almost every other of his distinguished contemporaries: Sherwood Anderson, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Ernest Hemingway, and Thomas Wolfe, to name but a few.

It hardly needs to be repeated that a writer lives on only for as long as his books are read. It is safe to predict that Steinbeck's books will continue to be read long after the critically acclaimed books of many of his contemporaries have become merely listed titles in dusty treatises. Edward G. Robinson has succinctly defined what he considers is "great" in literature and art. Greatness, he posits, is endowed upon a work by "a cumulative decision of the literate" and not necessarily by "the individual decision of the critic."⁴ Certainly, Steinbeck himself had little time for "sour scholars," as he once referred to them⁵, and preferred that his books be read for pleasure. In one sense, it is remarkable that in this immediate posthumous period his work enjoys continuing popularity among readers of all ages, and particularly among the young. It seems that he has something meaningful to say to each successive generation discovering him for the first time. He has not suffered the usual slump in interest and popularity which follows the deaths of most writers. His books still sell by the thousands, as attested by the considerable and unending turnover on the booksellers' paperback shelves.

Why should be so? Part of the reason is undoubtedly the current strange and almost overwhelming craving for nostalgia, centered principally on the twenty years which separated the two world wars. From the view point of this overly materialistic and frighteningly aimless age in which we now live, those distant times of the

twenties and thirties do indeed in retrospect exude a mellow and desirable glow. They represent days, which, depending on the fullness of our years, we can either never hope to know at firsthand or never hope to know again. We tend to forget that so far so many of us who lived through those two decades they also represent days from which we once sought desperately to escape. Steinbeck's books of the pre-war period are all very much of the time during which they were written. They mirror in fictive form the history, the emotive patterns, the mores of that particular era. They have survived, whereas so many "proletarian" novels of the depression years, with their outmoded polemics and their plodding naturalistic style, now seem virtually unreadable, except as historical or sociological case-books.

Steinbeck's books for all their outdated surface topicality, express universal and enduring truths. Even regarded as parables, they are the stuff of which life is composed. Thomas Heggen, the author of Mr. Roberts (1946), defending Steinbeck's portrayal of the Oklahoma tenant farmers in The Grapes of Wrath, has expressed the general view:

His characters live and breathe, also they cuss and drink and carry-on, but only because their real-life prototypes cussed and drank and carried on.⁶

Yet immediately, even while agreeing with the basic truth of Heggen's comment, one can still pinpoint one of the principal failures of Steinbeck's art: the fact that, apart possibly from Lennie Small, Ma Joad, and, to a lesser degree, the Doc of Cannery Row and Sweet Thursday, Steinbeck has never wholly succeeded in creating a truly memorable fictional character.

There is, moreover, when one thinks about it, a curious ambivalence about most of the men and women who people Steinbeck's books. They do not act with absolute psychological consistency, so that (probably as one result of Steinbeck's non-teleological theorizing) they seem driven less from the force of their own inner motivations than from the imposition of external circumstance. It is as if Steinbeck himself was not always altogether sure of their true natures. Perhaps drawing-as he so often did-portraits from real-life people, he tried too hard to avoid specific identification, or alternatively, created the fictional character from a conflicting compendium of real-life prototypes. Steinbeck's men and women certainly live on the pages of his books while we are reading about them, but once the book is finished and put aside those men and women become curiously almost faceless types, at best people seen through a mist, or animals who are only incidentally human, so that, for example, in the short story "The Snake," the rattlesnake and the rat and even the dissected cat remain as equally vivid in our minds as the two human protagonists, Dr. Phillips and mysterious woman.

That Steinbeck derived great material success from his books can not be denied. This fact, in itself, has unfortunately been the perfect recipe for critical condemnation from some quarters. It would seem that many critics and scholars, eschewing Edward G. Robinson's proposition, have almost always held an inherent suspension of and occasionally a downright undisguised hostility towards popular artistic success.

Furthermore, Steinbeck's eternally questing mind, eager ever to explore new subjects and new territory, has earned him additional critical disfavor. Many critics have deprecated his apparent diversity of style and content. Warren Beck has declared: "Steinbeck's total production has been so various in its themes that it is impossible to abstract a general and fairly consistent view of it, as can be done with Faulkner, Willa Cather, Conrad, and many older novelists."⁷ Steinbeck himself is on record as frequently maintaining, he had no interest in writing the same book twice. Oddly enough, this diversity was apparently not something which ever disturbed his readers, who continued to buy his book avidly as they came out. Normally, the reading public buys the new Hemingway or the new Ivy Compton-Burnett, or (at the other extreme) the new Harold Robbins or Mickey Spillane because it knows what to expect: the familiar formulae in new permutations. Popular acceptance may be one thing, but there can be no doubt whatsoever that Steinbeck's critical reputation has suffered from the difficulty some critics and scholars have encountered in fitting him into the sort of watertight literary box to which Warren Beck refers.

How can one, for instance, equate the uncompromising realism and violence of *In Dubious Battle* with gentle satirical humour of *Tortilla Flat*, or the carefully-paired theatrical construction of *Of Mice and Men* and *The Moon Is Down* with the sprawling saga of *East of Eden*? Steinbeck, of course, was fully aware of the problem. In an interview given to a British journalist in 1959, he stated:

I once worked out a thing about criticism that it hates to change its mind. The only safe writer is a dead one for the critics. If he changes, a writer confuses critics, and

yet if he doesn't change he's really dead. I'm surprised there's been any continuity at all in my books.⁸

At that time, although he still had nine more years to live, Steinbeck was approaching the end of his writing career, one more novel and two full-length works of non-fiction only still to come from his pen. Now that pen has been laid down forever and one can assume that Steinbeck can be regarded, to use his own expression, as "safe"—there will be no more surprises to confound his critics, but also sadly no more books to delight his readers. It is, then, now possible to contemplate the whole oeuvre from a more objective view point than one was able to adopt while Steinbeck was still alive. I hope to demonstrate in the following chapters that despite the strictures of those "confused" critics and those "sour" scholars and in the face of Steinbeck's own alleged but not altogether convincing astonishment, there is indeed an overall thematic and stylistic unity to his work and that work in its totality (accepting the inevitable ups and downs, the happy successes and the dismal failures that must of necessity punctuate the career of a writer as obsessively experimental as Steinbeck) represents an extraordinary literary achievement.

John Steinbeck, was a very unassuming type of man and writer, who never ran after popularity. As his social attitude and relationship to society changed, his literary career also witnessed changes. James Woodress rightly says,

When he was most afraid of popularity and momentary success, he was most of the social critic and the best writer. When he was being engulfed by success, the struggle against it produced some excellent work. But when he was drowned by his popularity and royalties, Steinbeck entered in his period of artistic decline. He

passed through phase one in the Thirties, phase two in the Forties, and phase Three in the Fifties.⁹

Peter Lisca seems to hold the same view when he says that in the Thirties Steinbeck had been under the influence of Jungian Thought, thinking in terms of archetypes and racial memory, but after 1950 he became much more "Freudian" and thus individual in his outlook.¹⁰

Roy S. Simmonds, an English Steinbeck scholar living in Billericay, Essex, observed that Steinbeck's work "enjoys continuing popularity among readers of all ages and particularly among the young."¹¹ This simultaneity of Steinbeck's popularity in England and Japan, in other words, his acceptance across both the Atlantic and the Pacific, tells us something about the international appeal of this great novelist.

Steinbeck's wide popularity means that his work gives the readers pleasure, even if "the lips of sour scholars"¹² do not always care for its taste. I realize, of course, that there may be a gap between a writer's popularity among the general public and the degree to which he is understood. A writer's popularity sometimes is based on the misunderstanding of the reader. What is important to remember, however, is that in literature, or more generally in art, misunderstanding can be an oblique form of understanding. The critical establishment is not the only correct reader. All it can do to present an interpretation of a work, or, as a mere expedient, to extract the writer's message from it. But when we reflect upon the dynamic fusion which takes place between a book and the reader in the act of enjoying literature, the views of established criticism loose their apparently objective foundation. By

established criticism I mean the critical view that the essence of a work of literature expresses its author's pen, and finally that the reader should "correctly" understand what the author tries to convey to him.

Thus, while the general public may recognize that Steinbeck's characters are sometimes "guinea pigs"¹³ or "symbolic marionettes"¹⁴ and that Steinbeck was the writer of so-called proletarian novels, they also recognize that Steinbeck and his novels offer more than what those critical labels denote. Surely this is why Steinbeck enjoys a lasting popularity among the general public. While the more scholarly may speak of the general public in slightly denigrating terms, that same general public is obviously intellectual enough to distinguish between what is enjoyable and what is not. We should keep in mind, therefore, that what supports a writer's popularity is the mass of perceptive general readers and not the professional critics alone.

The Steinbeck Society of America, founded in 1966, and the "Steinbeck Quarterly", which has provided a forum for outstanding Steinbeck research since 1968, are, I believe, two great outgrowths of the hitherto silent voices of that sensible general public, without which even the Steinbeck scholar, Tetsumaro Hayashi would have hesitated to launch either the Society or the Steinbeck Quarterly or the Steinbeck Monograph Series.

As I wrote a few years ago,¹⁵ the past history of Steinbeck criticism has all too often been a history of scholarly fault-finding with Steinbeck's so-called versatility. This approach has been keynoted by Edmund Wilson and Alfred Kazin (who, I might add, have pronounced a negatively interpreted versatility). Critic after critic

has underscored this view through the repetitious use of such words as oscillation, fluctuation, diversity and variability.

Concerning his ideology, the critics have used more detracting terms: bankrupt realism, homespun philosophy, homemade mysticism, fickle sentimentality, hausfrau sentimentality, and on and on. With regard to his characterization, as I mentioned before, "guinea pigs" and "symbolic marionettes" were the two typical pejoratives. With these shoot-from-the-hip attacks by the critical establishment, Steinbeck gradually sank beneath the surface of scholarly attention. He was condemned to be a mere storyteller who did not warrant criticism.

At the same time, however, we have had our Tiresiases of Steinbeck literature in such scholars as Joseph Fontenrose, Warren French, and Peter Lisca, who have steadily maintained a positive appraisal of the writer. These men were the mainstays with which Hayashi, the founder of the Society, and the Steinbeck Quarterly, embarked upon a renaissance of Steinbeck criticism in 1966.

Today many aspects of Steinbeck literature have been brought to light by active scholars in the United States, Canada, and England, as well as Japan. Steinbeck and the Arthurian theme, female characterization in Steinbeck's fiction, Biblical references in his novels, textual criticism of some of his works, the exhaustive studies of The Grapes of Wrath, and the study of Steinbeck in film are among the many fruitful directions of contemporary criticism. All this research has done much to elevate Steinbeck criticism and hopefully will contribute to the

understanding of the essential aspect of his versatility which past criticism has attacked so vehemently.

Kazin wrote as early as 1942 that Steinbeck's versatility was "but a need to feel his own way..."¹⁶ without explaining what "his own way" might mean. The word "versatility" comes from the Latin verb *vertere*, meaning "to turn around or to revolve around." Thus the essence of the term is that there is a central idea around which something turns or revolves. Unless we ask ourselves what this something was in Steinbeck, we cannot pinpoint "his own way," nor can we grasp the true aspect of John Steinbeck as writer.

It seems to me that recent critical achievement in Steinbeck studies has, collectively, come to reveal just what was Steinbeck's own way, and at the same time has unmistakably shown that such hackneyed labels as "guinea pigs" and "symbolic marionettes" describe no more than the surface realities of his characterization and are thus far from convincing.

Steinbeck's principal thematic method is closely tied to his well-known-teleological thinking. And this thinking is in turn closely tied to an "ecological" point of view, which is derived from his pastoral impulse. It is interesting that Steinbeck used the term "ecology" more than twenty years before the word became so popular. Steinbeck's main contribution is his thematic method rather than any original thematic idea, because we have learned from Richard Astro's exhaustive research that "the non-teleological thinking essay was written not by Steinbeck but by Ed Ricketts and was reproduced almost verbatim in The Log from the Sea of Cortez."¹⁷

Betty L. Perez has observed that "*Sea of Cortez*" was conceived not as a supplement to Steinbeck's fiction, but as a work of feeling, meaning, and beauty in its own right.¹⁸ We support her observation if we agree with Steinbeck that "the design of a book is the pattern of a reality controlled and shaped by the mind of the writer"¹⁹ just as is the case with poetry or fiction. Perez's essay is one example of the maturity of today's Steinbeck scholarship. In her article she refers to key Steinbeck books by Lisca, Fontenrose, French, Lester Jay Marks, and also to the well-known essay by Frederick Bracher. It would appear, however, that her point of view owes much to Astro's John Steinbeck and Edward F. Ricketts: The Shaping of a Novelist. While it is too soon to summarize the nature of Astro's achievement in the history of Steinbeck criticism, we can say that while he realizes the importance of non-teleological thinking in the Steinbeck canon, he sees that thinking not as Steinbeck's philosophy but rather as a framework for his fictional structure. If viewed as a philosophy, Steinbeck's non-teleological thinking might indeed be seen as "homespun," but when viewed as a framework or vehicle for a fictional structure, it is, as attested in Astro's logical presentation, entirely effective. Astro's perspective seems to offer one of the most effective means thus far of understanding the Steinbeck canon. On this point I am sure he would be the first to insist that he owes a great deal to French, Fontenrose, Lisca, Joel Hedgpeth, and other predecessors in Steinbeck Scholarship.

As to how Steinbeck criticism will develop in the future, I cannot say for certain. More detailed examinations will surely be made of his individual work. And perhaps the efficacy of non-teleology as a critical tool will be tested in studies of Steinbeck novels dealing more with the soul of the individual, such as *The Winter of Our Discontent*.

It may also be useful to re-examine *Cup of Gold*, which Astro has condemned on the grounds of thematic incompetence. Astro writes:

It is fruitless to speculate how *Cup of Gold* might have differed had the novelist known Ed Ricketts while writing it. All one can say is that *Cup of Gold* fails largely because of its thematic incompetence, a tendency in Steinbeck's writing which disappeared after his friendship with Ricketts began.²⁰

I find this statement questionable on two points. It is true that it was in 1930, one year after *Cup of Gold* was published, that Steinbeck met Ed Ricketts, his mentor, and it is also true that Steinbeck acquired his non-teleological viewpoint while under Ricketts's guidance. I believe, however, that in order to have a truly meaningful encounter with a mentor or a friend, one must himself be already sympathetically compatible. It would, therefore, be more logical to assume that in 1929 when he wrote *Cup of Gold*, there was already in Steinbeck some element corresponding to Ricketts' established thinking, Steinbeck's interest in biology, particularly in marine zoology, was already awakened when he was a student at Stanford University. It was only intensified and given a focus by his friendship with Ricketts.

Steinbeck, for his inheritance, took the orchards and growing fields of California, the wasteland of the Depression, the refuse Camps of rebels and the slums

of poverty. He helped himself also to a scientific laboratory and certain places into which men retire to meditate. He, too, found pity and terror among his fellow human beings but, like Fitzgerald, he also found beauty, charm, and wit. Though the two men would never have thought of themselves as collaborators, they shared the responsibility of presenting in fiction all the conflicts that have confused our time and yet confirmed its aspirations.

Steinbeck speaks to us with special immediacy because in curious way he anticipated attitudes toward the human experience, which have particularly engaged the intelligences of the young in recent years. Many of Steinbeck's Characters seem to have been the forebears of the rebels who have gathered in centers of protest from Greenwich village to the Haight- Ashbury district of San Fransisco. What can the dissidents of Tortilla Flat, Canary Row, and Sweet Thursday be called but dropouts from society who have the same reason for rejecting old patterns of belief as to members of the hippie generations? On the negative side the Credo of today's young revolutionaries seems, like that of Steinbeck, to have been influenced by a pervasive disillusionment with the gospel of success, by contempt for what seems to them to be cynical commercialism, and by resentment of arbitrary authority. On the positive side, as their banners insist, they wish to be guided—again as were the group-conscious residents of Cannery Row—by a preference for love over the destructive impulses of human mature. Steinbeck accepted as early the 1930's the obligation to take a stand in his writing against tendencies in the American way of life to which the campus rebels of the present have been making vigorous objection.

More than this, Steinbeck never forgot the crucial character of the confrontation between man and his destiny. In the least sober of his books *Sweet Thursday*, he slipped in a statement which succinctly sets forth his own fundamental belief:

Men seem to be born with a debt they can never pay no matter how hard they try.

It plies up ahead of them. Man owes something to man. If he ignores the debt, it poisons him, and if he tries to make payments the debt only increases, and the quality of his gift is the measure of the man.²¹

The novels, plays and short stories of this conscientious artist represent successive efforts to pay his debt to man. Wide in range of their interests, diverse in mood, passionately concerned in their sympathies, they all celebrate the worth of man. For that integrity Steinbeck demands justice and respect; to that integrity he lends the support of his own Conviction that all men everywhere are and must be inextricably identified with their kind. Much more clearly than in the instance of any other American writer of his time Steinbeck's consistent effort to establish the dignity of human life offers the measure of the man.

A curious view of Steinbeck, expressed by some of his critics, presented him as a kind of native natural genius who, having limited resources of technique and an even more severely limited vocabulary, blundered occasionally into displays of impressive, if brutal, power. Closer examination of his way with words should have to dispel that illusion. He was, in fact, a stylist of originality and grace. Just as he set up the structure of each of his best book in accordance with a well-planned architectural design, so he brought together the elements of his sentences with an

'artist's disciplined awareness of his own values. He expressed his attitudes, his sympathies, and his ideas in figurative language that remains fresh because his metaphors were entirely his own.

The faults and limitations of Steinbeck's style have to do with matters of taste. Here, indeed, he did sometimes falter. It must be pointed out, however, that certain charges of grossness brought against books like Cannery Row would suggest themselves only to readers of parochial sensibility. The candor of the light entertainments belongs as surely to their themes as the bluntnesses of Rebelais, Sterne, and Swift belong to their satiric material. To have turned away in timidity from the obligatory scenes of grotesquerie would have amounted to artistic irresponsibility. Yet it is true that Steinbeck was capable of strewing a page or two with ribaldries that are conspicuously inappropriate to character and mood. The Winter of Our Discontent puts into the mouth of a cultivated man, Ethan, bits of verbal outrageousness that would have shocked the outspoken residents of Cannery Row.

The charge that Steinbeck's style is heavily laced with sentimentality should be examined closely on suspicion of bias. Some readers of The Grapes of Wrath brought it against him disingenuously, hoping to discredit his social attitudes by demeaning his way of expressing them. Disinterested analysts of his work were more perceptive even amid the near hysteria that greeted the book's appearance. Still, one must admit that he yielded to the temptation to be extravagant, at crucial movements, in presenting scenes of sentiment. Though he often used the word

"gently" with ironic intent he used it far too often as he also overworked the even more lush "tenderly." And if sentimentality may be defined as the deliberate distortion of the probable in the interest of what is strikingly picturesque, then it is true that Steinbeck is sometimes sentimental, twisting his characters into dubious postures of nobility. The last scene of *The Grapes of Wrath* provides an example. In it a girl who has just lost her child at birth gives her breast, charged as it is with milk, to a man who has collapsed of starvation. Humanity, one understands, owes something to humanity which it must cross any gap to pay. But the symbolic act fails of its own excessive strain. It is patently a theatrical gesture used to bring down the curtain on an artificially composed tableau.

But, considering Steinbeck's temperament and the abundance of his imagination, it is remarkable that such excesses were few. His style contributed warm benefits of sympathy and spontaneity to each important book. Reappraising his work, one is reminded that style is the man and that this was a remarkably whole and wholesome man.

A special dimension is evident in Steinbeck's work when it is compared with that of most of the writers of his time. He was not content to be merely an observer of mores and recorder of the movements of the moment. His books were all products of a speculative intelligence. The writing of fiction was for him a means of trying, for his own benefit and that of his readers, to identify the place of man in his world. His conception of that world included not merely the interests of economics and

sociology but those of science and the realm of the spirit as well. Into the bloodstream of his work he released a steady flow of ideas to enrich its vigor.

An apprentice chemist in his youth and, in his middle years, part owner of a laboratory of marine biology, Steinbeck had always a semiprofessional interest in science. The scientific studies he engaged in, which were guided by a highly trained friend, Ed Ricketts, reinforced his belief in the oneness of all life—organic and inorganic, animal, vegetable and aquatic. The book Sea of Cortez, written in collaboration with Ricketts, is in part of statement of that belief. It is also an account of a voyage up and down the Gulf of California to take specimens for a collection which, it was hoped, would constitute in it self a history of the marine life of the region.

What the investigators felt that they found in each tide pool they visited was "a world under a rock," a tiny microcosm of the universe. They comment:

....it is a strange thing that most of the feeling we call religious...is really the understanding and the attempt to say that man is... related inextricably to all reality, known and unknowable. This...profound feeling....made a Jesus, a St. Augustine, a St. Francis, a Roger Bacon, a Charles Darwin, and an Einstein. Each... reaffirmed...the knowledge that all things are one thing and that one thing is all things—plankton, a shimmering phosphorescence on the sea and the spinning planets and a expanding universe, all bound together by the elastic string of time.²²

Such passages have baffled some of Steinbeck's readers, leading them to the conclusion that his personal philosophy amounted to nothing but animalism, the denial that man has a spiritual nature. It is curious that his testimony should have

been so misread. In his Nobel address he made two significant declarations: first, that he lived, as a writer, to "celebrate man's proven capacity for greatness of heart and spirit, courage, compassion and love": second, that "a writer who does not believe in the perfectibility of man" cannot claim to have a true vocation.²³ These might be dismissed as the afterthoughts of an elderly convert, apologizing for the heresies of his youth, if Steinbeck had not anticipated such affirmations many years before in *Sea of Cortez*. There he made it clear that a sense of man's oneness with the universe should not drug the mind into passivity. Man is not merely the creature of an unknowable pattern of existence. He has made himself unique among animals by accepting responsibility for the good of others. Only he has this "drive outside of himself," that is, toward altruism. It is the "tragic miracle of consciousness" that has re-created him. "Potentially man is all things"²⁴ and his impulses urge him often to be greedy and cruel. But he is also "capable of great love." His problem is to learn to accept his cosmic identity, by which Steinbeck means: to become aware of himself as an integral part of the whole design of existence. Tom Joad said it for him more succinctly in *The Grapes of Wrath*: "Well, maybe...a fella ain't got a soul of his own, but on'y a piece of a big one."²⁵

The theme of oneness is developed in *Sea Of Cortez* with illustrations drawn from scientific observation. In an illuminating passage he describes the phenomenon of interdependence among aquatic creatures:

The schools swam, marshaled and patrolled. They turned as a unit and dived as a unit...We cannot conceive of this intricacy until we are able to think of the school as an animal itself, reacting with all its cells to stimuli which perhaps might not

influence one fish at all. And this larger animal, the school, seems to have a nature and drive and ends of its own...a school intelligence.²⁶

His sense of unity stirred once more, Steinbeck pushes the speculation on: "And perhaps this unit of survival [the school of the fishes] may key into the larger animal which is the life of all the sea, and this into the larger of the world."²⁷

This is the same concept which animated Steinbeck's imaginative re-creation in *The Red Pony* of the movement which he calls westering. As the old man who has been the "leader of the people" remembers:

It wasn't Indians that were important, nor adventures, nor even getting out here. It was a whole bunch of people made into one big crawling beast... Every man wanted something for himself, but big beast that was all of them wanted only westering....We carried life out here and set it down the way those ants carry eggs...The westering was as big as God, and the slow steps that made the movement piled up until the continent was crossed.²⁸

So, as he might have said, the movement of westering keyed into the life of the continent and that into the life of the world.

It was the readiness to search behind the facts of life for a philosophical resolution of their complexity that gave depth and a rich texture to Steinbeck's picture of the life of his time. He had the rare ability to blend speculation into his fiction, making it an integral part of a narrative plan. Only a few of his contemporaries attempted to establish so broad a rapport with the minds of readers. Of such writers Thomas Mann offers the century's most brilliant example. As Joseph Wood Krutch once pointed out, Steinbeck's name must be linked with that of his

European counterpart in any discussion of the novelist as thinker. Mann explored his *Magic Mountain* and Steinbeck his shimmering sea of contemplation but in doing so neither sacrificed the authority of his voice as storyteller.

Alexander Cowie has suggested, thinking of Steinbeck: "perhaps this is the final responsibility of the novelist: he must be true to his time and yet save himself for time."²⁹ Steinbeck was certainly true to his time in his eagerness to be identified with scientific enterprise and his willingness to take the guiding principles of science as his own. He might be called a moral ecologist, obsessively concerned with man's spiritual struggle to adjust himself to his environment. It is significant that this storyteller, conscious of a mission, undertook to popularize theories about the salvation of man's total environment long before public attention focused on the discipline of ecology.

Steinbeck also nourished within himself the attitudes toward social reform that were growing slowly in the national consciousness of his time. His protests, his rejections as well as his affirmative convictions about the hope for regeneration, were exactly those that have been taken up by leaders of opinion in a later day enabling them, as teachers, theorists, and legislators, to change our minds in the direction of greater sensibility concerning human rights. Always the artist, never a practicing reformer, Steinbeck dramatized situations in American life and espoused beliefs about the need of room for growth in a way that helped to awaken the conscience of his fellow Americans.

Steinbeck was in addition a kind of working Freudian in the broad sense that he used the novel to remind readers that the myth of the past contain the wisdom of the race, that they tell us more about ourselves than sources of factual information can convey. Many, perhaps most, of the novelists of the 1930's and 1940's were deeply imbued with the same idea. But Steinbeck, consciously and conscientiously exploring the suggestions of Frued (and of Frazer whose work he may have known even better), covered a far broader field than did his fellow writers. His was an ambitious and inclusive effort to relate contemporary about "the human condition" to that of the great witnesses of the past. His work suggests again and again that the story of humankind is a steadily continuing one, full of passions that seem as familiar in a setting of two thousand years ago as they do in our own time. It is a sense of the past made present that gives Steinbeck's best books their universality of tone. Old perils the like of which still surround us, old aspirations renewed as commitments by our restatement of them—these are the elements that contribute the essence of drama to his stories and give them distinction.

Steinbeck said that the one commandment of life is "to be and survive." His work may be said to fulfill that commandment. In 1962, when Steinbeck was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature, his long-running feud with the critics reached its peak. There can be little doubt that Steinbeck was deeply wounded, particularly during the final two decades of his life, by what he regarded as the general lack of critical understanding of his work. Stopping off in England on his way home to America from Stockholm, he told one interviewer: "I've worked very hard on my

books, and maybe people will look at them a little more closely now to see what I've tried to do there."³⁰

From the beginning of his career, he had nursed an uneasy suspicion of the critical establishment and had frequently been in the habit of reacting in typical fashion to its deliberations and judgments. "Critics are stupid b...", he had told another British interviewer a year previously. When this interviewer pointed out that that was a generalization, Steinbeck agreed: "Yeah, but it's one I like."³¹ In his Nobel Prize Acceptance Speech he could not forebear even moment of triumph, to return to the attack. "Literature, he declared, "was not promulgated by a pale and emasculated critical priesthood singing their litanies in empty churches..."³² It was, as far as his own career was concerned, a point well made. Lack of critical acclaim had not diminished continuing and consistent popular recognition.

One member of the "pale and emasculated priesthood" to which Steinbeck referred was undoubtedly Arthur Mizener. In an article which appeared in the New York Times Book Review only the day before Steinbeck received the award from the hands of the King of Sweden, Mizener had posed the question: "Does a Moral Vision of the Thirties Deserve a Nobel Prize?" and had concluded that it was "difficult to find a flattering explanation for awarding this most distinguished of literary prizes to a writer whose real but limited talent is, in his best books, watered down by tenth-rate philosophizing and, in his worst books, is overwhelmed by it."³³

While there is a certain validity in what Mizener says, it is not altogether clear just what he means by "tenth-rate philosophizing" or by what assumed yardstick he

purports to grade it. There is much more validity, surely, in Steinbeck's hope that his work would, as a direct consequence of the Nobel Prize, attract more heedful attention. Too few of the established critics of the day had seemingly ever attempted to understand what he had been doing. It was comparatively easy for them to be clever in attacking or ridiculing the admittedly cracker barrel surface philosophies he put into the mouths of his characters and perhaps too frequently into his authorial interpolations, thus overlooking the other more significant underling philosophical truths he was positing as a careful reading of, for example, The Log from the Sea of Cortez would have revealed to them.³⁴

Long before "ecology" became an emotive word in the world's vocabulary, Steinbeck was, in such books as The Log from the Sea of Cortez, Travels With Charley and even Sweet Thursday, warning us of the dangers threatening the environment as a result of man's inherent greed and carelessness. When one applies the non-teleological approach to a study of the animal kingdom and to Steinbeck's characters, one can clearly appreciate how limited is the control these animals, these creatures of the tide pool, these bindlestiffs and migrant workers can exercise over their own destinies. His concern over the cancerous spread of the materialistic element in society dates from his very first book, Cup Of Gold, and is expressed in every subsequent book he published. "All my writing life has been aimed at making people understand each other" he maintained,³⁵ and of East of Eden he wrote: "I want to make this book so simple in its difficulty that a child can understand it."³⁶ The holistic viewpoint so frequently adopted in his books, proclaiming as it does the

oneness of all creation, exemplifies one manifestation of this desire of his to promote understanding and unity between peoples, while the deceptive clarity of his style and his thought processes should not be regarded as evidence of any lack of intellect on his part. The surface philosophies he expounds are the warm human philosophies that the ranch-hand and the man in the street can assimilate, appreciate, and identify himself with. As such, it should be remembered, they are far more replete with simple wisdom than the detached, intellectually-presented philosophies of academicians. It was clearly this firmly-held anti-intellectual stance, together with his possibly ill-advised public pronouncements and his continuing popular success despite the marked falling-off in the quality of his work, which, after the brief honeymoon period in the mid and late 1930s, eventually alienated various sections of the establishment and attracted their scorn.

Acknowledging the multitudinous riches he has given us, we can forgive Steinbeck his occasional lapses (*Burning Bright*, in particular), and can even accept the inevitability of the more or less steady regression of his literary importance during the post-war years. The war does indeed appear as a very definite watershed in his career. Writing in the April 1941 issue of *The Congregational Quarterly*, J.S.

Noack gave expression to what all Steinbeck's admirers were at that time thinking:

It will be curious to see what the war will do to Steinbeck, to his viewpoint, to his selection of subject-matter. In a world changing as rapidly as this, no man could appear to have better qualifications than he for reflecting and interpreting important phases of the picture, regardless of what it is to be.³⁷

We know, now, of course, that the promise was not fulfilled, that instead of encompassing in his work the broad thematic patterns of *In Dubious Battle* and *The Grapes of Wrath* and recapturing the essence of the individual life going on among the mass movements of people and in the shadow of great events he seemed to become (*East of Eden* possibly excepted) more introspective and parochial, often disguising his increasing unease with the contemporary world under an inadequate cloak of facetiousness. In 1945, the year the war ended, he declared:

A couple of years from now I think I'm going to be able to write a book about the war, based on the things I've seen. It takes a year or two for things to percolate through me and then I can write about them.³⁸

But during those next two or three years Steinbeck was otherwise preoccupied. His second marriage was breaking up. He was deeply involved with the film director Lewis Milestone and the actor Burgess Meredith, among others, in projected film versions of some of his novels and short stories, of which only *The Red Pony* eventually came to fruition. His reading public waited in vain for the great war novel from his pen, and had to be content with the reprinting in 1958 of most of his 1943 wartime dispatches for the *New York Herald Tribune* in the volume *Once There Was a War*.

For the benefit of those more vociferous of his critics, who, pointing to the post-war decline, still suggest either by insinuation or by direct accusation that Steinbeck was perhaps in the end guilty of prostituting his art for the sake of continuing popularity and financial gain, it would be pertinent to remind them of this following passage from *Journal of a Novel*:

The craft or art of writing is the clumsy attempt to find symbols for the wordlessness. In utter loneliness a writer tries to explain the inexplicable. And sometimes if he is very fortunate and if the time is right, a very little of what he is trying to do trickles through—not ever much. And if he is a writer wise enough to know it can't be done, then he is not a writer at all. A good writer always works at the impossible.³⁹

If Steinbeck was guilty of anything at all, it was certainly not of prostituting his art, but rather of immense artistic courage. He was never content to rest on his laurels, as he might easily have done, by continuing to reproduce what he had already demonstrated he could do supremely well. Had he steered the safe, well-tried course, it is just possible that he may have been a greater writer in the last analysis, if not, because of his unpredictability, such an exciting one.

Steinbeck's work is firmly established in the mainstream of traditional American literature, the mainstream formed in part from the three converging streams of transcendentalism, vernacularism, and regionalism, in each one of which the undying vestiges of Old World literary traditions are still very much alive. There is, for all his endless (but in one sense limited) experimentation with style and subject matter, a quality of intrinsic and reassuring classical simplicity about Steinbeck's work. He learned his lessons well from the old masters. It is this quality which endows his books with their aura of enduring stability, timelessness even, so that in the long run one can speculate with some assurance his work will date neither as rapidly nor with such finality as the work of some of his more stylistically daring and currently more highly regarded contemporaries.

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